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## **Chivalric Games at the Court of Edward III: the Jousting Letters of EUL MS 183**

In the Special Collections of Edinburgh University Library is a manuscript known as the ‘Royal Letter Book’. Written in the 1390s–1410s, it contains several hundred copy letters of royal correspondence stretching from the reigns of Edward III to Henry IV. Among the diplomatic and administrative communications, five quite different letters have recently come to light. They are written as if from imaginary or exotic queens or ladies, each recommending a worthy combatant to the lady presiding over a joust at the English court. Cast in fictive frame, in Insular French, they appear to be vivid early contributions to the deliberate theatricalisation of battle games between members of the court. In tones ranging from the magnificent to the comic, the letters draw together romance motifs and real individuals; they offer engaging, intimate but enigmatic insights into the entertainment, relationships, and administration at court. Since this group of letters has been almost wholly unnoticed and unknown until now, and deserves wider availability, we are presenting here an edition with translation and commentary. This is introduced by a preliminary essay on the significance and implications — theatrical and historical — that the letters may carry for all who are interested in late medieval courtly culture.

### **The Jousting Letters of EUL MS 183**

In spite of many remaining enigmas surrounding their composition and copying, the letters in EUL MS 183 offer intriguing new evidence of theatricalised jousting in England. Apparently dating originally from the mid-fourteenth century, they are not only significantly earlier than other currently known records, but also revealingly different in tone. The letters offer new insights both into the imaginative management and purposes of chivalric sports, and into the culture and relationships of the court of Edward III.

### **Provenance**

The manuscript in which the letters survive is a scribal collection of copies of royal correspondence.<sup>1</sup> These copies are not contemporaneous with the originals, but gathered subsequently by staff in a royal writing office, probably working largely between the 1390s

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<sup>1</sup> For full details, see Manuscript Description.

and 1410s. The collection contains, in no perceivable order, examples of diplomatic and domestic administrative correspondence from the reigns of Edward III, Richard II and Henry IV. Under Edward III, the royal writing offices were less formally structured than became the case later, making it hard to identify any particular official source for these letters. But records of the originals made at the time were clearly available to the clerks of the 1390s–1410s, probably working either in the Signet or Privy Seal Office, who copied them into the Letter Book. Somewhat similar, though rather more formal, copy-letter collections exist in Oxford, All Souls College MS 182 and Cambridge University Library MS Dd.3.53, although neither of these contain anything like the Edinburgh Jousting Letters.<sup>2</sup>

Some later analogous material is preserved, not in administrative collections but in manuscripts shared by officers of arms. A collection of thirteen letters, similar in form and style to the Edinburgh examples, survives in relation to a tournament held in 1401 at Eltham honouring the visit of the Byzantine emperor, Manuel Palaeologus II.<sup>3</sup> Henry IV being a widower, the jousts were presided over by his nine-year-old daughter Blanche, to whom the letters are addressed; copies are preserved in six separate manuscripts, all associated with subsequent officers of arms.<sup>4</sup> While the Edinburgh jousting letters differ from the 1401 collection in various subtle ways, they are closely related in genre. Their more playful tone, and the fact that they appear to have survived only in these Letter Book copies, might seem to suggest that heraldic officials were not involved. Sydney Anglo, one of the first to draw attention to the 1401 letters, observes that they ‘constitute perhaps the earliest surviving fanciful challenges for an English tournament and suggest a fourteenth-century allegorical tradition of which practically all traces have disappeared’.<sup>5</sup> The Edinburgh letters seem to provide exactly such a trace of fourteenth-century practice. However, their survival apparently only within this Letter Book, as well as enigmas within the letters themselves, raise many questions about the status and implications of the vivid scenarios they present.

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<sup>2</sup> See A. L. Brown, ‘The Latin Letters in MS. All Souls 182’, *The English Historical Review*, 87 (July 1972), pp. 565–573; for MS Dd.3.53 Kari Anne Rand Schmidt, *The Authorship of the Equatorie of the Planetis* (Cambridge: D.S.Brewer, 1993), pp. 150–1.

<sup>3</sup> John Priestley, *Eltham Palace* (Chichester: Phillimore, 2008), pp. 133–38; Sydney Anglo, ‘Financial and Heraldic Records of the English Tournament’, *Journal of the Society of Archivists* 2 (1962), 183–95; Juliet Barker, *The Tournament in England, 1100–1400* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1986), pp. 97–98.

<sup>4</sup> Until now, five manuscripts of these letters have been known: London, College of Arms, MS Arundel xxvi, fols 33<sup>r</sup>–40<sup>v</sup>, and MS L. 6, fols 145<sup>v</sup>–150<sup>v</sup>; London, British Library, Cotton MS Nero D.ii, fols 260<sup>v</sup>–262<sup>r</sup>, and Add. MS 34801, fols 36<sup>r</sup>–42<sup>v</sup>; Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Douce 271, fols 40<sup>r</sup>–47<sup>r</sup>. A sixth copy has now been located in Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, Adv. MS.32.6.9, fols 63<sup>v</sup>–69<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>5</sup> Anglo, ‘Financial’, pp. 188–89.

## Dating:

Like many other items in the Letter Book, the Jousting Letters carry no dates of composition. All five include formulaic gestures of dating, but these are couched either vaguely or in fantasy terms, as ‘in the thirtieth year of our birth’, or ‘the year of Mahomet, God’s Messenger, one thousand...’. The organisation of the manuscript also gives no clear indication of the date of writing. It is the content of the letters that provides some clues, if no absolute certainty, of their original point of composition.

Broadly, the tone and tenor of the letters suggest the reign of Edward III. Several refer to ‘Philippa’, who is saluted with titles appropriate to Edward’s wife and queen. Our knowledge of Edward’s activities, interests and temperament confirms that the culture of his court was sympathetic to the kind of playful chivalric spectacle the letters imagine. His lifelong enthusiasm for tournaments and jousting is well known, with evidence in wardrobe accounts and contemporary histories of elaborately staged and often dramatized tournament festivals.<sup>6</sup> Contemporary literature offers fictionalised portraits of Edward and his court that emphasise his jovial camaraderie and delight in chivalric display. *Winner and Waster*, apparently engaging with events roughly contemporaneous with the letters, explicitly creates a picture of Edward, as ‘a comliche kynge crowned with golde, / Sett one a silken bynche, with septime in honde’ before a silk pavilion, arbitrating between chivalric opponents.<sup>7</sup> Associations have also been made recently between Edward’s court and that portrayed in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, where festive play and chivalric adventure is overseen by a king who ‘watz so joly of his joyfnes, and sumquat childgered’, always eager for ‘sum siker knyȝt / To joyne wyth hym in iustyng’ (ll. 86, 96-7).<sup>8</sup> Edward’s successor, Richard II, while also valuing spectacular tournaments, was not himself a jouster and appears to have run a less festive and companionable court than his grandfather.<sup>9</sup>

The Jousting Letters also include more specific details that seem to point definitively to Edward’s reign. ‘Nadamours’ requests a joust to be set up with ‘the youngest knight of the honourable company of the Garter’, providing a *terminus a quo* of 1348 when the Order of

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<sup>6</sup> Juliet Vale, *Edward III and Chivalry: Chivalric Society and Its Context 1270-1350* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1982), pp. 57-75; Sir Nicholas Harris Nicolas, ‘Observations on the Institution of the Most Noble Order of the Garter’, *Archaeologia: or Miscellaneous tracts relating to antiquity*, 1770-1992, 31 (1846), 1-163.

<sup>7</sup> *Wynnere and Waster*, ed Warren Ginsberg, TEAMS Middle English Texts (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1992) ll. 86-7. For topical reference, see Vale, *Edward III and Chivalry*, pp. 73-5.

<sup>8</sup> W.G.Cooke, ‘*Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*: A Restored Dating’, *Medium Aevum* 53 (1989), 34-48; Francis Ingledew, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight and the Order of the Garter* (Notre Dame, Ind: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006); W.G.Cooke and D’A. J.D. Boulton, ‘*Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*: a Poem for Henry of Grosmont?’, *Medium Aevum* 68 (1999), 42-54.

<sup>9</sup> Nigel Saul, *Richard II* (Newhaven: Yale University Press, 1999), pp. 339-43, 352-4.

the Garter was founded; Philippa's presence in that letter and several of the others would give a *terminus ad quem* of her death in 1369. In fact, if our identification of the Sire de Chastillon in the 'Nadamours' letter is correct, it would suggest a much more specific moment, 1357–60, when Jean II le Bon and the prisoners of Poitiers were in England and there was a burst of chivalric festivity and play.<sup>10</sup> The 'Pantesilia' letter, which describes the personal arms of the preferred opponent, looks towards the same few years: the young fighter can be identified as Henry de Braybroke, a squire of the Black Prince who is recorded in the prince's Register as active between 1358 and 1362. 'Judith' may imply, though obliquely and comically, that Edward III himself might be coming towards the end of his active jousting career, which would also fit this chronology. It is even possible that this letter's suggestive erotic joust through 'the long winter night' plays on the spectacular nocturnal New Year tournament of 1357/8.<sup>11</sup> It falls, like 'Nommez', in the festive Christmas period, which would provide an appropriately carnivalesque context for the Judith scenario. All of these clues, with other hints of possible context explored in more detail in the commentaries, would suggest that, whether or not the letters form a closely linked group, the most probable date range spans the later 1350s to the early 1360s, with the period following Poitiers, 1357-60, especially likely. This would mean that they witness to dramatized and partly allegorical jousting activity in England some forty years before our current earliest evidence in the 1401 letters.

### Authorship

The question of the authorship of the letters is ambiguous and multi-layered. It involves not only the purported senders, but whoever may have first ordered them to be written, the original scribes, and the scribes of the copies in the Letter Book. Almost none of these can be identified with any certainty.

The senders named in the letters are all fantasy figures, except in 'Nadamours' which is unusually sent as from Queen Philippa. The others are all given names suggesting romance or biblical provenance, although none obviously evokes a specific literary or mythological character except possibly Emely in 'Norriez' (see Commentary). While the recipients of the letters, most often Philippa, seem to be members of the English court who are addressed as

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<sup>10</sup> See note 80.

<sup>11</sup> See note 65; also Neil Murphy, *The Captivity of John II, 1356-60: The Royal Image in Later Medieval England and France* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), p. 20. Records suggest that the young Chaucer may well have been present at these Christmas festivities at Bristol, at least by Epiphany: see *Chaucer Life-Records*, ed. by Martin M. Crow and Clair C. Olson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966), pp. 14, 18.

patrons of the jousts, nothing indicates that the senders' names are intended to mask similarly real individuals.<sup>12</sup> Behind the theatrical personae, however, someone, presumably within the English court, clearly ordered the letters to be written. We cannot tell who this might have been: it is possible that the organiser of the jousts, or even the jousters themselves, devised theatrical frameworks for their encounters. More likely, perhaps, the letters may emanate from the circle of Queen Philippa. It is clear that women did play an active part in the chivalric activity of the court. For the Garter celebrations in 1358, the Wardrobe Accounts record £500 paid to the queen for her *apparatus* (apparel/preparation), while letters of invitation, under the privy seal and signet, were sent to both ladies and lords.<sup>13</sup> The Edinburgh letters' playful tone and sometimes intimate references, and the rhetorical model of diplomatic correspondence between powerful women, could well suggest a game set up by the women. If so, these letters would imply an analogy to E. Jane Burns' account of the *Roman du Hem* (1278), where 'the actions and activities of fighting men ... are orchestrated and directed by female protagonists who play the leading roles'.<sup>14</sup> There is similar later evidence of women actively involved in the orchestration of jousting.<sup>15</sup> The Edinburgh letters thus raise very interesting questions about women's authority, and the inclusion of their voices, in this kind of performance event.

The identity of the original scribes is wholly uncertain: it is hard to go further than recognising them as clerks working in the royal household.<sup>16</sup> We are on slightly firmer ground with the clerks who copied the letters into the Letter Book. The hand of three of them appears to be that of Robert Frye, who may also have written the marginal titles of all five letters. Whoever copied the other two was in every likelihood at some point a colleague of Frye, who seems to have had overall charge of the final manuscript. Less clear, although of significant interest in understanding them, are the reasons why the clerks of the 1390s–1410s chose to make copies of these letters, which are so unlike the other correspondence in the Letter Book. So different are they, that they have previously been categorised simply as

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<sup>12</sup> Senders of the 1401 letters are similar figures, including Venus, Cleopatra, and Naturo.

<sup>13</sup> J.L. Gillespie, 'Ladies of the fraternity of Saint George and of the Society of the Garter' *Albion*, 17 (1985), pp. 259–78 (p. 262–3).

<sup>14</sup> E Jane Burns, 'Performing Courtliness' in *The Oxford Handbook of Women and Gender in Medieval Europe*, ed. by Judith Bennett and Ruth Karras (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 396–408 (p.401).

<sup>15</sup> In 1465, Lord Scales describes being set up for a joust with the Bastard of Burgundy by a group of noble ladies, who secretly dropped a copy of the articles of challenge into his cap: Samuel Bentley, *Excerpta Historica: Or, Illustrations of English History* (London: Samuel Bentley, 1831), pp. 176–188 (p.178).

<sup>16</sup> For a list of known clerks from the period see T.F. Tout, *Chapters in the Administrative History of Mediaeval England: the Wardrobe, the Chamber and the Small Seals*, Vol. V (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1930), pp. 110–12.

‘literary exercises ... imaginary letters’.<sup>17</sup> However, the precise historical accuracy of some of the allusions, as well as current understanding of the management and popularity of dramatised battle games, work against this interpretation, while the 1401 examples confirm the seriousness with which such activities and documents came to be taken.

Although it is not impossible that the Edinburgh letters were copied as curiosities or jests by Frye and his colleagues, given the nature of the Letter Book it seems more likely that, like the rest of the correspondence, they were preserved probably primarily as models for future communications. The marginal titles attached to the letters provide little evidence of the clerks’ intentions. While the ‘Judith’ and ‘Pantesilia’ letters are generically identified as relating to the friendly combats of jousts of peace (*de calangis pacis*), the other three are not given any such descriptive gloss. Their titles simply pick on a word or idea mentioned in each letter, ‘Nommez’ and ‘Norriez’ describing the jousters, and ‘Nadamours’ the recipient. The more elaborate collection of 1401 letters, apparently testifying to a continuation of the practice, may offer some context for the interest of the clerks of the 1390s in letters of this kind. However, like many features of the letters, their purpose within the Letter Book remains unclear.

### **The Letters and theatrical jousting**

In spite of all the uncertainties about their provenance and purposes, the Jousting Letters offer us revealing new insights into both the conduct and the significance of mid-fourteenth-century courtly chivalric play. The principle was not new: romance and fantasy frameworks for large-scale tournaments were well established by this period, with events from at least the thirteenth century borrowing from fictional romance. The famous tournament at Le Hem in 1278 and Edward I’s Round Table in 1284 both famously drew on romance themes, with defenders and challengers taking on Arthurian roles.<sup>18</sup> Edward III himself mounted various theatrical tournaments: in 1331 ladies were led in procession on silver chains by knights masked as Tartars; in 1343 the defenders fought as the Pope and twelve Cardinals; while in 1359 the King and his party dressed as merchants and aldermen.<sup>19</sup> The celebrations for

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<sup>17</sup> Edouard Perroy, (ed.), *The Diplomatic Correspondence of Richard II*, Camden Third Series, 48 (London: Royal Historical Society, 1933), p. xxii

<sup>18</sup> Nancy Freeman Regalado, ‘Performing Romance: Arthurian Interludes in Sarrasin’s *Le Roman du Hem* (1278)’, in *Performing Medieval Narrative*, ed. by Evelyn Birge Vitz, Nancy Freeman Regalado, and Marilyn Lawrence (Cambridge: Brewer, 2005), pp. 103–22; R. S. Loomis, ‘Edward I, Arthurian Enthusiast’, *Speculum* 28 (1953), 114–27; Martin Biddle, ‘The Making of the Round Table’, in *King Arthur’s Round Table: An Archaeological Investigation*, ed. by Martin Biddle (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2000), pp. 337–92.

<sup>19</sup> See Vale, *Edward III and Chivalry*, pp. 62, 67; W. Mark Ormrod, *Edward III* (Yale University Press, 2013), p. 391.

Edward's planned establishment of a Round Table in 1344, which preceded the creation of the Order of the Garter in 1348, have been persuasively linked to the elaborate romance of *Perceforest*.<sup>20</sup> This vast compilation presents Alexander the Great as a precursor of King Arthur in establishing chivalric civilisation in Britain.<sup>21</sup> E. Jane Burns persuasively sums up such elaborate fictionalisation as a principle of courtly living, seeing 'medieval courts as porous cultural zones in which diverse protagonists in scenarios of chivalry and courtly love migrated with relative ease between the realms of history and fiction'.<sup>22</sup> The Edinburgh letters, however, appear to present striking evidence of a more personal theatricalisation of individual jousting encounters at Edward's court. They reveal the importance of performance in the spectacle of the individual joust, the readiness of the court and its members to inhabit extended fantasies of romance chivalry, and the use of playful spectacle both in setting the tone of the court and in cementing its relationships.

The letters, following traditional organisation of tournament encounters, employ the standard protocols of medieval diplomatic in titles, greetings, dating and address, lending authority to their fictions.<sup>23</sup> Their romance elaboration, however, engages a motif which became central to much courtly performance entertainment from the fourteenth to the sixteenth centuries: the arrival of supposedly unknown visitors from distant exotic lands, to honour, if also to challenge, the court of the resident royal host. Clearly suitable for tournaments, this pattern also has an established literary presence from at least the work of Chrétien de Troyes, with Meleagant in *Lancelot* and Le Chevalier Vermeil in *Le Conte du Graal*.<sup>24</sup> Its fullest development in English is in the appearance of the supernatural challenger in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, and it came to shape many of the popular disguising and mumming entertainments of the Plantagenet and Tudor courts.<sup>25</sup> It offers both excitement and affirmation to the court, the thrill of the playfully supposed exotic unknown embodying a compliment to the power and magnificence of the host court.

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<sup>20</sup> Richard Barber, 'Edward III's Arthurian Enthusiasms Revisited: *Perceforest* in the Context of Philippa of Hainault and the Round Table Feast of 1344' in *Arthurian Literature* 30, ed. by Elizabeth Archibald and David Johnson (Woodbridge: Brewer, 2013), pp. 55–74.

<sup>21</sup> *Perceforest*, première partie, ed. by Gilles Roussineau (Paris: Droz, 2007), pp. ix–xvi.

<sup>22</sup> Burns, 'Performing Courtliness', p. 401.

<sup>23</sup> Pierre Chaplais, *English Diplomatic Practice in the Middle Ages* (London: Hambledon and London, 2003), pp. 102–23.

<sup>24</sup> Chrétien de Troyes, *Le Chevalier de la Charrette (Lancelot)*; *Le Conte du Graal (Perceval)*, ed. and trans. Charles Méla, in Chrétien de Troyes, *Romans suivis des chansons*, La Pochotèque (Paris: Librairie Générale Française, 1994).

<sup>25</sup> Meg Twycross and Sarah Carpenter, *Masks and Masking in Medieval and Tudor England* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), pp. 151–68.



As in all these entertainments, the identity of those taking part is known to the observing court, even if they are veiled in fictional personae. The Edinburgh letters clearly expect both the challenging and defending jousts to be recognised, often referring to them by circumlocutions and in-references which would be, or become, pleasurably transparent. A reference to specific arms, as in 'Pantesilia', or 'the youngest knight of the Garter, present in your court' in 'Nadamours', are the most formal of these identifications, while 'the best knight under the age of fifty', or the jest about the fighter who only knows about hunting, apparently draw on the topical knowledge and gossip of those present. The sponsored jousts are often referred to as young, untried, or in need of chivalric education, although the informal intimacy of tone might suggest that this need not always be taken wholly literally. We cannot now identify securely any of these jousts apart from the young Henry de Braybroke of 'Pantesilia'; but the letters invite such identification with tantalising hints suggesting the game being played in the court. The Notes and Commentaries, although unable to reach firm conclusions, pursue these hints as far as possible, suggesting how the challenges seem to arise from and refer to the contemporary community of the court.

The letters specify the rules of each joust. These are generally straightforward: commonly six runs with the lance, usually in low saddles, sometimes insisting that the rider is not fastened. This seems to confirm, as some of the letters lay down, that these are jousts with the aim of unseating the opponent rather than breaking spears on each other's shield.<sup>26</sup> The rather more formal 1401 letters lay down similar rules of engagement although with somewhat fuller and more varied instructions. But the presence of the explicitly jesting 'Judith' letter does somewhat unsettle the purely martial tenor. In this joust the lance blows 'in low saddles' take on a suggestive sexual meaning, making it unclear how far the other letters may share the pleasure of *double entendre*. While none of them is as directly erotic as 'Judith', this does alert us to the potential frissons that may overlie all of these fanciful challenges.

### **The performance of the Jousting Letters**

The Jousting Letters prepare the way for real jousts; but they themselves probably contributed to the performance of the spectacle. Although addressed to the lady presiding over the combat, internal and external evidence would suggest that they were not intended for her private reading. The elaborate formality of their composition implies public channels of

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<sup>26</sup> See Barker, *Tournament in England*, pp. 147, 171-2.

communication, while the extravagantly fictionalised personae ascribed to those involved, and the oblique allusions and apparent in-jokes and references, seem designed for a wider appreciative audience. They depend on shared knowledge among a closed or elite group, aware of itself and the identities of its members; as the references arise from the group, the pleasure of recognition also belongs to it. The rhetoric of these letters thus seems to call for a public sharing within that defined circle. Malcolm Richardson has recently demonstrated how formal letters were, in principle, designed for reading aloud, while Martin Camargo has argued that the *artes dictandi* imply, if they do not state, training in the effective performance of letters.<sup>27</sup> One study of medieval university drama proposes that a number of surviving model letters concerned with Christmas festivities, from the late-fourteenth and early-fifteenth centuries, were specifically designed for performance.<sup>28</sup> One of these, enjoining the students of Merton College to elect a new King of Beans, echoes the Edinburgh letters in being sent from ‘Neptune, the offspring of heaven and the son of the great Diana’.<sup>29</sup> Although academic rather than courtly, such missives seem both to share the form and confirm the performance intention of the Jousting Letters.

As with so many features of the letters, however, it is not easy to probe further into their specific occasions and audiences. The Edinburgh letters might seem to envisage court entertainments that are rather less elaborate than the 1401 examples. Those were devised specifically for an entertainment of ceremonial significance: some refer to Manuel II Paleologus, the visiting Byzantine Emperor, or to the Christmas festivities, the New Year’s Day occasion of the jousts; one describes additional spectacles of participants ‘riding dragons’, serpents and shields throwing out fire. In contrast, the Edinburgh letters rarely allude to any specific occasion, although ‘Nommez’ mentions ‘your festive feast of Christmas’, and ‘Judith’ ‘your most famous feast’. Several name specific times for jousts to take place, but these would only be intelligible at the moment of reception of the letter: ‘Judith’ implies ‘Monday’, ‘Nommez’ speaks of ‘next Tuesday’, while Pantesilia orders ‘this very day immediately after mealtime’. The fictional frames are also less elaborated than those

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<sup>27</sup> Malcolm Richardson, ‘The *Ars Dictaminis*, the Formulary, and Medieval Epistolary Practice’ in *Letter-Writing Manuals and Instruction from Antiquity to the Present*, ed. by Carol Poster, Linda C. Mitchell (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2007), pp. 52–66 (p. 56); Martin Carmargo, ‘Special Delivery: Were Medieval Letter Writers Trained in Performance’, in *Rhetoric Beyond Words: Delight and Persuasion in the Arts of the Middle Ages*, ed. by Mary Carruthers (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp.173–89.

<sup>28</sup> Thomas Meacham, ‘Exchanging Performative Words: Epistolary Performance and University Drama in Late Medieval England’, *Medieval English Theatre* 32 (2010), 12–25.

<sup>29</sup> *Records of Early English Drama: Oxford*, ed. by John R Elliott, jr, Alan H Nelson, Alexandra F Johnston and Diana Wyatt, 2 vols. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press and British Library, 2004), II, 799 and 1081.

in the 1401 letters, which are generally longer and more discursive, offering more extended courtesies between the correspondents, more poetically flourished descriptions of the courts concerned, and expanded stories around the visiting jousters. The Edinburgh letters are less rhetorically developed, setting up the personae and titles of the sender and establishing the romanticised fictions more swiftly, interlaced with private allusions and jests. Rather than a large-scale entertainment, this may suggest something glamorous but relatively informal, even to some degree impromptu, although the jousts imagined or arranged could be playful adjuncts to more formal events. It is also not clear how far the Edinburgh examples relate to the same festivity. They could all belong to one occasion, such as the Christmas entertainments of 1357/8 celebrating the presence of the captives of Poitiers (see commentary to ‘Nadamours’); since Christmas and New Year’s Day both fell on Mondays over this holiday, the references to Christmas and Tuesday in ‘Nommez’, and to Monday in ‘Judith’ would fit these celebrations.<sup>30</sup> But it is equally possible that the letters relate to a range of jousts across different festive gatherings. Given the early date of the letters, and our lack of knowledge of their immediate context, it remains impossible to tell what occasions they were designed for or their relation to any wider festivity.

Envisaging the letters’ audience and performance setting is also inevitably impressionistic. The ‘implied audience’ that emerges from this analysis of the letters appears to consist of members of the court who are gathered to enjoy entertainment of a relatively informal kind, during a festive celebration including jousting. Letters sent between rulers, as these purport to be, were normally read aloud to an appropriate court circle; that is also the scene envisaged in literature, both epic and romance.<sup>31</sup> In a much later parallel, the 1465 letter proposing a joust between Lord Scales and the Bastard of Burgundy, apparently written by the court ladies, was handed to King Edward IV, who ‘commaunded the same openly to be red in his high presence’.<sup>32</sup> The Edinburgh letters seem to expect an audience who know each other intimately enough to recognise allusions and share jokes in a carnivalesque atmosphere. The ‘Judith’ letter, particularly, with its frank sexual jest, suggests a companionable and relaxed assembly, although one also enjoying the chivalric display and courtly magnificence asserted by the exotic fictions. The festive Christmas court of Arthur at the start of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, with jousting, music and dancing, exchanging of gifts, and

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<sup>30</sup> See [www.5ko.free.fr/en/jul.php?y=1357](http://www.5ko.free.fr/en/jul.php?y=1357) [consulted 16.2.2018].

<sup>31</sup> For a detailed discussion of this motif in French epic see Jean-Claude Vallecalle, *Messages et ambassades dans l'épopée française médiévale: l'illusion du dialogue* (Paris: Champion, 2006), pp. 89–108.

<sup>32</sup> Bentley, *Excerpta*, p. 179.

laughter from the ladies ‘þoʒ þay lost hadn’ (l. 69), might offer an idealised analogue for the moment of reception of these letters, allowing all to share in the playful celebration of those named.

### **The culture and purposes of the Jousting Letters**

The Edinburgh letters not only offer significantly earlier new evidence, but give us a more intimate insight into the nature and aims of courtly chivalric entertainment at the court of Edward III. They bring vividly to life the richly mixed tones of this court culture. The impulse to frame courtly battle sports in an exotic fantasy of romance fiction seems an extension of Edward’s value for the literary and material spectacle of chivalry, seen throughout his reign in the jewels, plate, tapestry and magnificent clothing that adorned his court, as well as his library of French romances and his staging of spectacular tournaments.<sup>33</sup> However playfully, the jousting letters assert the status of the members of the court as chivalric heroes and heroines, whose sporting skills perform the glory of a place where ‘honour and arms are delighted to make their home’ (‘Pantesilia’), proving that compared to Edward’s court ‘the chivalry of other kings ... [is as] the small and lesser stars to the great and shining moon’ (‘Nommez’). But the spectacles devised in these letters appear not to be primarily directed toward impressing the outside world; instead they perform the mutual celebration of the court elite to itself, affirming its chivalric status.

Yet combined with the delight in magnificent display, and indeed inextricable from it, is a jocular and self-mocking, at times outspokenly bawdy humour. The emphasis of many of the letters is on playful delight, sent from the ‘Castle of Enjoyment in our Kingdom of Joyfulness’, presenting the chivalric hero as a ‘young and jolly jouster’. A combatant may be amicably deflated by reference to his supposed inexperience, or tested to see ‘whether you hope to find anything good in him’, with a continuing possibility of innuendo about his sexual prowess. This comes to a head in ‘Judith’ which, beginning from the traditional form of the other challenges, appears to slide into envisaging an energetic sexual bout, in which the jouster is to ‘deliver himself of as many of those blows with lances in low saddles’ as he can ‘on a long winter night ... without squire or servant other than himself all alone’. If we read this letter right, the encounter envisaged is between the king and queen themselves and, even more startlingly, proceeds to a cheerfully outspoken mock-questioning of Edward’s virility

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<sup>33</sup> For romances, see Michael Bennett, ‘France in England: Anglo-French Culture in the Reign of Edward III’, in *Language and Culture in Medieval Britain: The French of England, c.1100–c.1500*, ed. by Jocelyn Wogan-Browne (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2009), pp. 320–33.

and a comical imagining of the bedroom scene. If this letter was performed in the same way as the others, and there is no inherent reason to assume otherwise, it shows a clear skill in the construction of a gradually building jest delivered to a tolerant and companionable audience. This is a strand of humorous familiarity which appears to have suited Edward's temperament in governing his court. Echoes might be seen in the extravagantly playful Christmas merrymaking attested to in the wardrobe accounts, or the comic nicknames bestowed on his personal henchmen in the 1350s – 'Verjuice and Vinegar', or 'Mustard and Garlic'.<sup>34</sup>

The incorporation of women's voices in the letters, and perhaps women's initiatives in setting up the encounters, offers another revealing perspective on courtly entertainment culture, perhaps particularly in the context of this frank comedy. Through the letters, women's voices speak to each other as rulers, organising men's pursuits and prowess, with some element at least of teasing control of men's chivalric identities. 'Judith' also appears to cast the woman as the authority in the imagined sexual encounter, holding the knight to account for his performance, and exacting playful penalties for failure. Even if these female voices are fictional projections composed by men, they allot women important roles in court performance, roles to which the women must at least have consented.<sup>35</sup> If, as perhaps seems more likely, it was the court ladies themselves who designed and even dictated the letters, we are given insight into a culture of mixed gender entertainment in which women could partake, and perform, on seemingly equal terms.

The Jousting Letters belong to the royal court, but they also cast light on the wider culture of noble leisure pursuits of the fourteenth century. They are not a unique style of entertainment, but share features with a wide range of different literary, performance and game activities. In literary terms they draw on the widespread taste for Arthurian and other chivalric romances: a tale like *Partonope de Blois* offers an extended romance analogue of the patronage of a young knight by an exotic Eastern princess, which most of the letters take as their scenario.<sup>36</sup> In the case of 'Judith', there is also a distinct echoing of the French fabliaux that enjoyed courtly circulation in mid-fourteenth century England. The four fabliaux of MS Harley 2253, probably copied around 1340, similarly present a courtly world

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<sup>34</sup> Ormrod, *Edward III*, pp. 103-4, 319, 601.

<sup>35</sup> For a differently focused discussion of comic female presence in courtly entertainments see Sue Niebrzydowski, 'Monstrous Appetite and Belly-Laugh: A reconsideration of the humour in *The Weddyng of Syr Gawen and Dame Ragnell*', *Arthurian Literature* 27 (2010), 87-102.

<sup>36</sup> The French version of this story < <https://www.dhi.ac.uk/projects/partonopeus/> > [consulted 7.03.18] is thought to date from 1170-1180s, the Middle English version from the early fifteenth century < <https://www.middleenglishromance.org.uk/mer/44> > [consulted 9.10.17]. No specific relationship is known between Edward's court and this romance, but it offers an analogue to the framing motif of the letters, and a model for female sexual initiative in shaping a knight.

taking pleasure in explicit bawdiness, and *Le Chevalier Qui Fist Les Cons Parler* even introduces not ‘dys livres de lyne ... touz arsez sur son crokette’ but ‘quatre lyvres de cotoun ... parempli bien le coun’.<sup>37</sup> Moving from literary texts to performance activities, we have less certain evidence for comparison; but Edward’s wardrobe accounts for the 1340s record disguising activities involving elaborately exotic costumes, dressing teams of dancers as angels, swans, dragons, peacocks and wodewoses, *ad faciendum ludos Regis*.<sup>38</sup> Some fifty years later, Lydgate composes disguisings which sometimes reflect more elaborated versions of the exotic visitation, with the performers presented as journeying from distant lands to challenge or to honour the noble patron of a feast. Drawing on similar motifs to the Edinburgh and 1401 letters, these abandon combat, replacing the jousting with dancing, dicing, gift-giving or other forms of interaction.<sup>39</sup> Other interesting analogues, in tone and mood if not in content or structure, are courtly pastimes such as *Le Roi Qui Ne Ment* or *Ragemon le Bon*. In these charade-like games participants pose questions, or perform fortunes, for the amusement of the mixed-gender company. Serena Patterson sees them as designed to ‘draw out innuendo and playful courtship ... and craft moments of embarrassment and dalliance’, and they present, according to Richard Firth Green, ‘a mixture of refined sentimentality and sexual licence’.<sup>40</sup> Such play of semi-performed companionable teasing among noble or courtly players has clear echoes of the ambience of the Jousting Letters.

In combining chivalric magnificence with robust laughter the Edinburgh jousting letters give some flavour of the lived experience of courtly culture; but they may also suggest how Edward used this culture as an instrument of his rule. It has often been argued that a significant element in the perceived success of his long reign came from his cultivation of positive relationships and comradeship with his nobles.<sup>41</sup> The jousting letters offer a glimpse

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<sup>37</sup> Carter Revard, ‘Four Fabliaux from London, British Library MS Harley 2253, Translated into English Verse’, *Chaucer Review* 40:2 (2005), 111–40 (p. 129; ll.248–51).

<sup>38</sup> Vale, *Edward III and Chivalry*, pp. 69–71; Twycross and Carpenter, *Masks*, pp. 136–37.

<sup>39</sup> Claire Sponsler, *The Queen's Dumbshows: John Lydgate and the Making of Early Theater* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014); Twycross and Carpenter, *Masks*, pp. 159–61.

<sup>40</sup> Serena Patterson, ‘Sexy, Naughty and Lucky in Love: Playing *Ragemon le Bon* in English Gentry Households’ in *Games and Gaming in Medieval Literature*, ed. by Serena Patterson (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), pp. 79–104 (p. 84); Richard Firth Green, ‘*Le Roi Qui Ne Ment*’ and Aristocratic Courtship’ in *Courtly Literature: Culture and Context*, ed. by Keith Busby and Erik Kooper (Amsterdam: John Benjamin, 1990), pp. 211–25 (p. 222). Jacques Bretel’s account of the *Tournoi de Chauvency* (1285) describes nobles playing at *Le Roi qui ne Ment* and similar games during the celebrations: see Margaret Felberg-Levitt, *Les Demandes d’Amour* (Montréal: CERES, 1995), p. 23.

<sup>41</sup> Ormrod, *Edward III*, pp. 363–67, 600–601; J.S. Bothwell, *Edward III and the English Peerage: Royal Patronage, Social Mobility and Political Control in Fourteenth Century England* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2004), pp. 1–2.

of how such relationships might be fostered by the combination of generous festivity, chivalric sports, magnificent spectacle and the bonding force of shared explicit humour. These things can reinforce already established affinities, and promote good-will between associates. If, as appears, the letters also show that Edward was tolerant of jokes against himself, that only serves to strengthen his investment in a companionable ideal of brotherhood, widely evident in his various chivalric activities. Although in minor and playful ways, the Edinburgh letters and the performances they record contribute to this important aspect of Edward's kingship.

The Jousting Letters of MS 183 add significantly to our understanding of the history of court performance and of the wider culture of the court of Edward III. They constitute our earliest current material evidence for this kind of theatricalisation of jousting, pushing back forty to fifty years from the 1401 examples. In the imaginative frameworks they create for these events, combining chivalric spectacle and humour, and asserting women's voices and involvement, they throw revealing new light on courtly *mores* and on the culture of performance of the time. By documenting both specific individuals and broader courtly interactions, they provide further insight into Edward III's strategies in his relations with his nobility. Perhaps most intriguingly, as performance scripts they offer readers today vivid access to some sense of the lived experience of fourteenth-century court culture.

## **Edition of the Jousting Letters**

### **The Royal Letter Book: Edinburgh University Library MS 183<sup>42</sup>**

Copies of the five letters are conserved in a manuscript in the Centre for Research Collections of Edinburgh University Library, the 'Royal Letter Book' (EUL MS 183).<sup>43</sup> There is currently no evidence that the originals of these five letters might have survived, or that any other copies exist. The Royal Letter Book itself is a collection of 374 copy letters, in Latin and French, mostly from the reign of Richard II of England (r.1377–1399). However, the

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<sup>42</sup> Louise Gardiner is currently working on a calendar of EUL MS 183 which will eventually be published with a full introduction to and description of the manuscript.

<sup>43</sup> Catherine Borland, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Western Mediaeval Manuscripts in Edinburgh University Library* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1916), pp. 269–70.

manuscript also includes copies of a number of letters from the reigns of both Edward III (r.1327–1377), and Henry IV (r.1399–1413).

It seems that the EUL MS 183 was originally joined with another manuscript, EUL MS 182,<sup>44</sup> which contains a copy of the ‘Flores Dictaminis’ by Petrus de Vineis, a collection of proverbs and sayings, and fragments of a Year Book, dating from 3 Edward III (1329/1330), but no letters. Folio 154v of the Royal Letter Book bears the inscription ‘Sum liber Thome Nicholls’ in a late medieval hand, and sometime during the sixteenth or seventeenth century the combined manuscript was foliated: MS 182 was given the folio numbers 1 to 26, and MS 183, the Royal Letter Book, receiving the numbers 27 to 154.

According to a hand-written note on fol. 1<sup>r</sup> of MS 182, in 1818 the manuscript was owned by Arthur Taylor.<sup>45</sup> After Taylor’s death in 1870 it was acquired at auction by the antiquarian and collector David Laing who, after his own death in 1878, left his entire substantial manuscript collection, including the combined manuscripts MSS 182 and 183, to the University of Edinburgh, where it is still known as the ‘Laing Collection’.

The combined manuscript was subsequently split and re-bound at some time during the 1910s; around that time, the Royal Historical Society was planning to produce a calendar of the contents of MS 183.<sup>46</sup> This, however, does not appear to have happened; instead, Edouard Perroy included transcriptions of 159 of the 374 letters in his *Diplomatic Correspondence of Richard II*;<sup>47</sup> since then, a few other letters have been used by academics working, for example, on the lives of medieval clerks and on the medieval merchant community in Rome.<sup>48</sup> However, in contrast with other similar collections,<sup>49</sup> no full edition or calendar of MS 183 has been published, and more than half its contents remains obscure.

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<sup>44</sup> This assumption accords with the description of the two manuscripts in the report on the Laing Manuscripts which the Historical Manuscripts Commission submitted to Parliament in 1914, under the heading ‘A Register of Letters, etc.’ (p.1). However, Borland, *A Descriptive Catalogue*, pp. 268 and 270, published after the two manuscripts had been separated, erroneously links MS 182 with MS 180, and MS 183 with MS 178, although she correctly states that MS 182 and MS 183 had previously been designated as ‘Laing 351’ and ‘Laing 351a’, respectively, indicating that they had belonged together.

<sup>45</sup> This is probably Arthur (1790–1870), the younger brother of Richard Taylor, distinguished printer and naturalist, who from 1802 to 1852 ran the publishing house which became Taylor and Francis. Arthur was in partnership with his older brother in the firm, 1814–1823 (*ODNB* s.v. Richard Taylor).

<sup>46</sup> Borland, *A Descriptive Catalogue*, p.270.

<sup>47</sup> Perroy, *Diplomatic Correspondence*.

<sup>48</sup> See A. L. Brown, ‘The Privy Seal Clerks in the Early Fifteenth Century’, in *The Study of Medieval Records: Essays in Honour of Kathleen Major*, ed. by Donald Bullough and R. L. Storey (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), pp. 260–281; Gwilym Dodd, ‘Henry IV’s Council, 1399–1405’, in *Henry IV: The Establishment of the Regime, 1399–1406*, ed. by Gwilym Dodd and Douglas Biggs (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2003) pp. 95–115; Margaret Harvey, *The English in Rome, 1362–1420: Portrait of an Expatriate Community* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

<sup>49</sup> For example Oxford, All Souls College MS 182; Cambridge, Cambridge University Library MS Dd.3.53.



MS 183 consists of 128 vellum folios, almost all of which are closely written on both sides. It has an early-twentieth-century binding of cardboard with a leather covering; it measures 28 x 19 x 4.5 cm. The 128 folios are arranged in nineteen quires collated a<sup>6</sup>, b<sup>12</sup>, c<sup>6</sup>, d<sup>2</sup> (wants 2), e<sup>8</sup>, f<sup>8</sup>, g<sup>6</sup>, h<sup>6</sup>, i<sup>8</sup>, j<sup>8</sup>, k<sup>8</sup>, l<sup>8</sup>, m<sup>8</sup>, n<sup>7</sup> (wants 6), o<sup>5</sup>, p<sup>4</sup>, q<sup>6</sup>, r<sup>10</sup>, s<sup>2</sup>.

The manuscript has three sections, the middle section being distinct from the other two. This consists of forty folios, arranged in five quires of eight folios each; catch words link the individual quires; it was probably written in only one hand, which does not appear elsewhere within the manuscript. The middle section, therefore, forms a self-contained collection of its own, and was probably written slightly earlier than the other two sections. Two of the five Jousting Letters are found in this section of the manuscript.<sup>50</sup>

Unlike the distinct middle section, the first and final sections are similar to each other in appearance. Although they share the same dominant hand, both contain letter copies written in several other hands, apparently over a period of some years. When comparing these two sections and, in particular, when considering their contents, it seems likely that the final section of the Royal Letter Book was created before the section which is now placed at its beginning.<sup>51</sup> The remaining three Jousting Letters are contained in that final section.<sup>52</sup>

As for the contents of the letters, apart from the five Jousting Letters, all deal with domestic or international affairs of state and almost all emanate from one of the royal writing offices of the time, or are addressed to one of the three kings mentioned above. Many of the copies do not expressly state the names of the correspondents, nor, in many cases, the place or date of writing, although frequently this information can be deduced from the contents of the letters. Where the copies do show the date of the originals, the date-range is between July 1340 and January 1409; however, most of the originals date from the late 1380s and 1390s. In the case of the Jousting Letters the originals were probably written during the reign of Edward III, between the foundation of the Order of the Garter in 1348 and the death of Edward's queen, Philippa of Hainault, in 1369, a question which will be addressed in further detail below.

Having dealt with the dating of the original letters, there is the further question of when the copies of those originals might have been made. Neither in the middle section nor in the first and final sections are the copies arranged to represent the originals in their strict chronological order. Thus, the two Jousting Letters which appear in the middle section of the

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<sup>50</sup> EUL MS 183 fols 95<sup>v</sup>-96<sup>r</sup> and fol. 96<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>51</sup> Perroy *Diplomatic Correspondence*, p.xxiv

<sup>52</sup> EUL MS 183 fol. 126<sup>v</sup>[1], fol. 126<sup>v</sup>[2] and fol. 126<sup>v</sup>[3]-127<sup>r</sup>.

Letter Book and which are consecutive in relation to each other, are immediately preceded by an undated letter in French from either Richard II or Edward III to the king of Scotland relating to a truce that had been agreed between their two countries, and another letter in French of about June 1374 from Edward III to Sir William Elmham, captain and governor of Bayonne, relating to the siege of Bayonne.<sup>53</sup> These two Jousting Letters are then followed by an undated letter in Latin from Richard II to the pope concerning the election of an abbot, and a further letter from Richard II, undated and in French, addressed to his admirals and informing them of a safe conduct.<sup>54</sup>

Similarly, the other three Jousting Letters which appear in the final part of the Letter Book, which are likewise in consecutive order, are preceded by a letter in French of about 1389–1390 from Richard II to Roger Wigmore, the king's chamberlain and receiver for South Wales, and a letter in Latin from Pope Gregory XI to Edward III of August 1374, or earlier, concerning the diocese of Ely.<sup>55</sup> This group of Jousting Letters is then followed by a letter from Charles III, king of Navarre, in French, dated 5 October 1388 and demanding the return of the city of Cherbourg, and another letter in French, probably from Richard II, written at Westminster in about 1381/1382 and dealing with the threat posed by the Lollards.<sup>56</sup>

Thus, the scribes who created these copies did not place them in the chronological order of the originals which, in turn, indicates that they were not written at the same time as the originals. Instead, they appear to represent a subsequent selection. In the case of the middle section, which contains copies of original letters of up to about 1391, the copying process may have started at around then, or slightly earlier. These copies are written in a late medieval secretary hand. However, there is so far no evidence as to the exact nature or dating of this hand, in which two of the five Jousting Letters are written.

On the other hand, there is good evidence suggesting that the dominant hand of the first and final sections of the Royal Letter Book, containing the remaining three Jousting Letters, is that of the royal scribe Robert Frye. Frye's career in royal service is well-documented, spanning almost forty years, from about 1387 until his retirement in about 1425.<sup>57</sup> He probably not only copied many of the letters, but may also have added most of the rubrics which appear in the margins of a substantial number of the copy letters, including not

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<sup>53</sup> EUL MS 183 fol. 95<sup>r</sup>[1] and fol. 95<sup>r</sup>[2]-95<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>54</sup> EUL MS 183 fol. 96<sup>v</sup>[1] and fol. 96<sup>v</sup>[2].

<sup>55</sup> EUL MS 183 fol. 126<sup>r</sup>[1] and fol. 126<sup>r</sup>[2].

<sup>56</sup> EUL MS 183 fol. 127<sup>r</sup> and fol. 127<sup>v</sup>[1].

<sup>57</sup> See e.g. *Calendar of Patent Rolls 1377–1399*, 6 vols. (London: HMSO, 1895–1909), VI, p.463. It would exceed the remit of this article to investigate the connection between Robert Frye and EUL MS 183 in greater detail at this stage. For Robert Frye's general career, see Brown, 'The Privy Seal Clerks'.

only the three Jousting Letters contained in the final section of the manuscript, but also those in the middle section, which is otherwise not in Frye's hand.

### **The Jousting Letters**

The editions are critical single-manuscript editions. Corrections are made sparingly and only where scribal error seems patent. Capitalisation, punctuation, diacritics and distinctions of i/j and u/v follow modern practice; ff- = F; tironian barred 7 = et. Punctuation of the originals is very sparse, amounting only to the occasional use of a *punctus* and a double *punctus* after incomplete dates. The textual and critical notes present discussion of editorial procedure, including rejected readings. The translations aim to reflect the originals closely, especially with regard to their diplomatic. Each letter is followed by a commentary.

## **Letter 1**

### **(fol. 95<sup>v</sup>–96<sup>r</sup>) De Calengis Pacis**

Pantesilia, puissante Roigne de Perse, de Femenye et de Frisce, Dame de Damaske et d'Aufrike la graund, a tresbountevose, beieneuré dame Florippé, fameuse Roigne de Fraunce et de Flaundres, Princesse des provinces appurtenantes a la Petite Troie: amour, honur et joie! Tresbountevose, bieneuré dame, pur la tresgrand fame et renoune que de jour en jour se passe et vole des excellentes et fameuses filz del bon Troyen Brutus, nez et norriz en vostre court, en queux honur et armes se delitent a demurrer, nous vous envoions un nostre nurry, venour de noz veisines forestes et desertz, poy ou petit sachant si de chiens ou de chace noun, em priant tresentierment de trestout nostre cuer de comaunder a l'onurable esquier demurrant en vostre court que porte l'escu d'argent ove sept losenges de goules persé avec un molet de sable de lui delivrer de sys copes de launce, assis en bases selles, en vostre presence cest jour mesme tost après manger. Et celuy que plusours foiz voide la seele deinz les sys copees doigne a son compaignon une anele doré en guerdoner. Donee a nostre Chastell de Pucelles, ou Venus sovent se confort, l'an de nostre noble nativité trentisme.

## ***Translation***

### **Concerning Challenges of Peace**

Pantesilia, powerful Queen of Persia, of Femenye and Frisce, Lady of Damascus and of Africa the Great, to the most bounteous, fortunate lady Florippé, famous Queen of France and Flanders, Princess of the provinces belonging to Little Troy: love, honour and joy! Most bounteous and fortunate lady, on account of the very great fame and renown which daily circulates and flies about concerning the excellent and famous sons of the good Trojan Brutus, born and brought up in your court, in whom honour and arms are delighted to make their home, we are sending you one brought up by us, a huntsman in our neighbouring forests and deserts, who knows little or nothing of anything except dogs and hunting, begging you most sincerely and with all our heart to command the honourable squire living at your court who bears the shield of argent with seven mascles gules with a mullet sable to give him six blows with the lance, seated in low saddles, in your presence, this very day immediately after mealtime. And the one who falls from the saddle most times within the space of the six lance blows is to give his companion a golden ring as reward. Given at our Castle of Maidens, in which Venus often takes her ease, in the thirtieth year of our noble birth.

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### ***Textual and Critical Notes***

*De Calengis Pacis*: in margin; only Calengis has capital; the expression is probably a Latin translation of the common ‘joustes de paix’ / ‘justes of pees’ undertaken for pleasure with blunted weapons.

*Pantesilia*: large capital bow in line, descender in line space below; *punctus* in bow guarantees capital.

*puissante*: MS = ‘puissance’; ‘c’ and ‘t’ are more distinct here than in many MSS of the period.

*Femenye*: the Land of Ladies, often equated with Amazons.

*Frisce*: there are many possible interpretations of this name; given the other eastern associations of Pantesilia, Phrygia is more likely than Frisia; if the name is allegorical one

might read Land of the Young (i.e. ‘fresh’ and ‘lively’) or The Fallow Land (i.e. ‘deserts’), though this is less likely.

*beieneuré*: this rather odd form seems to be a composite: the first element *beien* conflates AN *bein* (Francien *bien*) and the first syllable of AN *b[e]enuré*, ‘blessed’; however, this sense is inappropriate to the context of the letter, so that *beieneuré* probably stands for *bieneüros*, ‘happy’.

*Princesse*: a tilde in the margin after ‘princesse’ indicates that it forms a word group with the beginning of the following line and not with preceding words.

*appurtenantes*: MS = ‘appurtenances’.

*excellentes*: MS = ‘excellens’ with correction ‘te’ in superscript.

*excellentes et fameuses filz*: the lack of consistency in writing noun-adjective agreements is evident and typical of later AN.

*nous*: The first stroke of ‘n’ – possibly intended for a capital – seems to be corrected from ‘long s’: it is in noticeably thicker and darker ink than letters around it.

*nurry*: although MS has capital N a common noun is probably intended.

*esquier*: This squire is identifiable from his arms: see Commentary.

*lui delivrer de sys copes de launce*: this construction giving instructions for the structure of the joust recurs with minor variations in all letters; AND registers ‘deliverer de’ = ‘deliver of’ only in the context of childbirth; Godefroy and T-L do not record the construction; the exact construction in a jousting or battle context is given by MED, s.v. ‘deliveren’, v. 5., with a direct object of the person receiving the blow or being the object of the attack.

*compaignon*: the scribe has added a bar of suspension or nasalisation over the last syllable; if this is not a simple error we should read ‘compaignoun’.

*guerdoner*: The exact form of the mark of abbreviation is not clear, but it looks more like the sign for *-er* than like a simple suspension bar, as seen over the final syllable of ‘compaignon’. I have therefore rejected the alternative resolutions ‘guerdonance’ and ‘guerdonement’, although neither is impossible.

*trentisme*: MS = ‘xxx<sup>me</sup>’.

### **Commentary**

The sender is identified as Pantesilia (Penthesilea, Queen of the Amazons). Uniquely, the addressee is also given a romance name: Florippé, a version of Floripas, name of the sister of Fierabras / Ferumbras, hero of a Charlemagne romance surviving in both French and English.<sup>58</sup> While her titles might suggest this is a fantasy name for Queen Philippa, who could well be theatrically styled ‘Queen of France and Flanders’, elsewhere Philippa appears under her own name. *Troia Nova* (New Troy) was a recognised name for London, recorded by chroniclers including Geoffrey of Monmouth; the variant *Petite Troie* (Little Troy) is recorded at least once in the fourteenth century.<sup>59</sup> The ‘sons of Trojan Brutus’ originally referred to the Celtic inhabitants of Britain; by the fourteenth century these supposed descendants of Aeneas were identified in the historiographical *Brut* tradition with the Anglo-French aristocracy of England.

Exceptionally, the person sent to Florippé’s court is not identified either by name or by rank. He is simply introduced as brought up (*nurry*) at Pantesilia’s court, described in apparently deliberate understatement only as an expert hunter. This could be appropriate to one supposedly brought up by Amazons, but is likely to be a playful local reference understood by its original audience, although now opaque. Conversely, the arms of the other jousting are described precisely. These belong to a member of the Braybroke family whose arms are *Argent, seven mascles* [voided losenges] *gules, three, three and one*. One recorded differencing exactly matches the arms outlined in the letter: *Argent, seven mascles Gules, in*

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<sup>58</sup> For the Fierabras tradition see Phillipa Hardman and Marianne Ailes, *The Legend of Charlemagne in Medieval England* (Woodbridge: Brewer, 2017), pp. 246–345. The name Ferombras also occurs in one of the 1401 letters.

<sup>59</sup> In 1388 Nicholas Brembre, once Lord Mayor of London, was hanged, allegedly because he planned to rename London ‘Little Troy’ (*Parva Troja*): *Hic, ut fertur, nomen Londoniarum delevisse meditatus fuerat, et apposuisse scilicet nomen novum, scilicet Parvae Trojae* (Thomas Walsingham, *Historia Anglicana*, ed. H.T.Riley, 2 vols, Rolls Series 28 (1863), II, pp. 173–4).

*chief a mullet* [pointed star] *Sable*.<sup>60</sup> The differencing, for a second son, is illustrated in *Fenwick's Roll*, 1413, London, College of Arms MS, Pt 1 (1471), blazon 194.<sup>61</sup>



This person is probably Henry de Braybroke, a younger brother of the third Sir Gerard de Braybroke (c.1332–1403).<sup>62</sup> Henry is recorded in the Black Prince's Register as receiving 'a complete suit of mail and a *ketilhat*' in 1358, and gifts of money in 1361 and 1362 where he is named as 'the Prince's squire'.<sup>63</sup> This identification demonstrates the intimate interrelation of fantasy and reality in the letters.

The combat instructions are cursory: the combatants are to make six lance blows, using 'low saddles'. Jousts of peace distinguished between play aiming to break the lance against the opponent's shield, using high saddles, and play aiming to unseat the opponent, using low saddles.<sup>64</sup> This letter envisages unseating, the loser being 'the one who falls from the saddle most', making low saddles appropriate. 'Jousting in low saddles' could, however, imply erotic innuendo, as in the more explicit jesting in the 'Judith' letter, fol. 96<sup>r</sup>. This might resonate with the request to joust 'in your presence, this very day immediately after

<sup>60</sup> Listed in *The Dictionary of British Arms: Medieval Ordinary*, Vol 4, ed. Thomas Woodcock and Sarah Flower (London: Society of Antiquaries of London, 2014) p. 211.

<sup>61</sup> We are grateful to the Archivist of the College of Arms, Dr Lynsey Darby, for her generous help and expertise in identifying these arms.

<sup>62</sup> See Braybroke, Sir Gerard III, in the History of Parliament online:

<<http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/>> s.v. Sir Gerard Braybrooke [accessed 18 September 2017].

<sup>63</sup> *Register of Edward the Black Prince*, ed. by M.C.B. Dawes et al., 4 vols (London: HMSO, 1930–33), IV, pp. 245, 388, 476. In the 1358 entry Henry Braybroke appears in a list concluding with a gift of armour to the Duke of Lancaster (Henry of Grosmont) 'for the jousts'. The *ODNB* entry for Robert Braybroke states that Henry died in 1362.

<sup>64</sup> Barker, *Tournament in England*, p. 147.

mealtyme', as well as the sender's location in 'our Castle of Maidens, in which Venus often takes her ease'. However, more probably the flirtatious tone in this letter is designed to give an extra suggestive delight to a real jousting combat, rather than offering an innuendo for sexual encounter.

## Letter 2

### **(fol. 96<sup>r</sup>) De Calengis Pacis**

Judith, fille al noble roy Josué, Emperice de Egipt et d'Araby, Roigne de Jherusalem et de Judé, Dame de Nuby et de les terres Nembroth, a tresexcellent Floure de Femmes, Phelippe, Roigne del Aventureuse Roiaume jadys al Roy Arthur, des Isles Honurables, Gernesey, Gales et del Graund Bretaigne, honur et amour eterne! Tresexcellent Floure de Femmes, pur ço que de certain la source et fontaigne d'amour et d'armes se tient toutdys en vostre courte, come fount les oyseux en l'eir et les mariners deinz le mere salé, de ço nous prent a purpose et tresgraund penser d'envoier nostre chier et bien amé esquier Bohors de Bassenue deins vostre treshonorable, famose feste, em priant tresentierment de cuer a vostre roial noblay de comaunder a vaillant esquier le ussher de vostre chambre, que comuniement se mette en agayte pur vous le lundys matyn, de lui deliverer de tauntz des copees de launces en bases scelles come ils purrout corere la longe nuyt de yvere, la clere lune luissant, saunz escuier ou servitour fors que soulement soy mesmes. Et en cas que lui prent appetit de repentir de cels fait, ou q'il faille de le faire, q'il face purveaunce et porte en vostre presence dys livres de lyne nette et sekke, q'ils soient touz arsez sur son croquette. Donee en nostre merveillouse manoir del Mont Syon, l'an de nostre loialle ley moÿsen mille etc.

### ***Translation***

#### **Concerning Challenges of Peace**

Judith, daughter of the noble king Joshua, Empress of Egypt and Arabia, Queen of Jerusalem and Judaea, Lady of Nubia and of the lands of Nimrod, to the most excellent Flower of Women, Philippa, Queen of the Adventurous Kingdom, in ancient days the kingdom of King Arthur, of the Honourable Isles, Guernsey, Wales and Great Britain, honour and eternal love! Most excellent Flower of Women, because certainly the source and fountain of love and arms is perpetually fixed in your court, as birds are in the air and mariners in the salt sea, we



therefore purpose and seriously determine to send our dear and well-loved squire, Bohors de Bassenu to your most honourable and famous feast, most wholeheartedly begging your royal magnificence to command the valiant squire, the doorkeeper of your chamber, who publicly keeps watch for you on Monday mornings, to deliver himself of as many of those blows with lances in low saddles as they can manage on a long winter night with the moon shining brightly, without squire or servant other than himself all alone. And should it happen that he forms the wish to repent of the deed, or if he fails to achieve it, let him make provision and carry in your presence ten pounds of clean and dry linen, and let them be thoroughly attached to his little hook. Given in our marvellous manor of Mount Syon, in the year of our loyal Mosaic Law one thousand etc.

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### ***Textual and Critical Notes***

*De Calengis Pacis*: in right margin at end of first line of letter.

*Judith, fille al noble roy Josué*: The most renowned biblical Judith kills Holofernes in the Book of Judith (canonical in Vulgate), but is not the daughter of Joshua. Perhaps more significantly, Judith in northern lands is one of the ‘Neuf Preuses’ as Joshua is one of the ‘Neuf Preux’. This may account for the association of the two names in this letter.

*Nembroth*: a bar appears to link -th; this is a stylised remnant of the looped ligature binding -th in late fourteenth and early fifteenth-century clerk hands; the reference is to Nimrod; in the Vulgate, Genesis 10,8; 1 Paralipomenon (= 1 Chron) 1,10; Micah 5,6. The presence of group -mbr- suggests a central French rather than Northern origin; the softened final -th [ø] is Anglo-Norman.

*Phelippe, Roigne del Aventureuse Roiaume jady al Roy Arthur, des Isles Honurables, Gernesey, Gales et del Graund Bretagne*: Philippa’s lands are taken from Arthurian romance: the Aventureuse Roiaume is Logres (England), or possibly more generally Britain, as in the Grail cycle; for the identification specifically with Logres see *Lancelot do Lac*, ed.

by Elspeth Kennedy (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), p. 33, l. 12, where it is called ‘Reiaume Perilleus Aventureus’; the Isles Honurables may be the same as the Isles Lointaines – land of Galehot in the *Prose Lancelot*. These are possibly the Isles of Scilly, but may be the Hebrides; Guernsey is not regularly part of Arthur’s realm; Wales is, but, interestingly, here it is separated from Great Britain.

*Bohors de Bassenue*: Bohors is a well-known character from Arthurian romance: in the *Prose Lancelot* he is cousin of Lancelot; in *La Queste del saint Graal* and *La Mort Artu* he is the third grail companion, the only one to return to Arthur’s court with news of the deaths of Galaad and Perceval in Sarras. His byname here is not a known one; the four minim strokes in the third syllable are hard to interpret; if we read “Bassenue” it could mean “low cloud” or “naked lower parts”; if we read “Bassevue” he is short-sighted. However we read the word, the intention to produce a comical effect with such an odd byname attached to a well-known knight from the Lancelot-Grail Cycle is evident.

*feste*: this is the first mention of a festivity: it could suggest a previously organised set of jousts.

*uss her*: this unnamed squire has the role of doorkeeper (French *huissier*) of the queen’s chamber, or private apartments; for the erotic use of the word *huis* (door) in fifteenth-century French see François Villon, *Testament*, l. 1782, apparently quoting an obscene song ‘Ouvrez vostre huys, Guillemecte’, in *Villon, Poésies complètes*, ed. by Claude Thiry (Paris: Livre de Poche, 1991).

*que comuniement se mette en agayte pur vous le lundys matyn*: this phrase is highly ambiguous; *que* might introduce an indirect command, but is regular as subject relative in Anglo-Norman, and *mette*, apparently subjunctive, occurs also as 3 pres. ind. in later Anglo-Norman; *comuniement* can mean ‘habitually’ or ‘publicly’ — I have chosen the latter; *se mettre en agayte* can mean ‘ambush’, ‘look out for’ or ‘watch over’

*lui deliverer de*: for the general use of this construction see Notes to Letter 1 above; the following sentences in this letter suggest that ‘lui’ should be read as a reflexive before the infinitive; for this usage see Geneviève Hasenohr, *Introduction à l’ancien français de Guy Raynaud de Lage* (Paris: SEDES, 1993), §101.

*des copees de launces*: AND does not register the form ‘copee(s)’, which appears to mean ‘a set of blows’, accounting for the full pl. art. ‘des’ rather than simple partitive ‘de’, which was coming into use in the fourteenth century; for the erotic use of this and similar jousting expressions see *La Demoisele qui sonjoit*, in *Nouveau recueil complet des fabliaux*, ed. by Willem Noomen and Nico van den Boogaard (Van Gorcum: Assen, 1988), IV, 45–55; 371–74 (Notes).

*ils*: there is more ambiguity here: the least likely reference is to the *ussheer* and Bohors; it could refer to either the doorkeeper or Bohors and Phelippe; it may be a generic indefinite plural, equivalent to ‘one’.

*q’ils soient touz arsez sur son crokette*: this phrase is very difficult to interpret: ‘arsez’, may be the pp of ‘ardre’ (burn, set ablaze, enflame) or of ‘aerdre’ (attach); ‘crokette’ may be ‘little hook’, with a probable obscene sense, or, with influence from ME, ‘curly locks’; in my translation I have opted for the meanings ‘attach’ and ‘hook’.

*l’an de nostre loialle ley moÿsen mille etc.*: despite an interesting insistence on the rectitude of Mosaic Law (or Faith – *lei* has both meanings) there is no attempt to give an accurate date according to the Jewish calendar.

### **Commentary**

Of all five Jousting Letters, this one appears the most obviously comic and jestingly erotic: a joke in the form of a jousting letter, rather than a real challenge cast in fantasy terms. While much of its expression is ambiguous, making interpretation difficult, the overall impression is of a sexual jest, designed for courtly entertainment.

The protégé sent to court is not identifiable; but the mismatch between the heroic Arthurian name *Bohors* and the odd byname *Bassenue* may be a preliminary marker of comedy, which increases as the letter unfolds. Bohors’ opponent is specified as a ‘valiant squire’ functioning as the doorkeeper of the queen’s private apartments, to whom a specific function is attributed once a week. Such precision suggests another joke which we can no longer interpret. This controller of access to the queen is to deliver six sets of lance-thrusts to somebody: the initial implication is to Bohors, but the rapid shift into singular verbal constructions, and the injunction that the *ussheer* is to be alone, with no squire or servant

present, implies an intimacy that seemingly removes even the oddly named Bassenue from the scene. The potentially suggestive implications carried by ‘jousting in low saddles’, along with the emphasis on the jouster fighting alone, and the duration of the long winter’s night, suggests that the joust described is more likely to be sexual than martial.<sup>65</sup> This may thus imply that the guardian of Philippa’s chamber is Edward III himself. If this is correct, then the letter would become a joyous encouragement to the King to score, not in the lists, but in bed.

Sexual innuendo is reinforced by the prescription that if the jouster repents or fails to complete the task he will be required to carry in Philippa’s presence ‘ten pounds of clean and dry linen’ which are to be ‘attached to his little hook’. Enigmatic as this sounds, the phallic overtones of the ‘little hook’ appear, in context, quite clear. The reference to the weight of linen is more puzzling. The language used recalls that of cloth-trade regulation, important in Edward’s governmental policy, such as the ordinance that no trader should buy ‘file de layn ne de lyne mes secchez et resonablement poisez’ (wool or linen thread unless dried and properly weighed).<sup>66</sup> Sexual connotations may also be in play: in *La Demoiselle qui sonjoit* (see Notes, supra) the young lady promises her prospective lover ‘chemise et braies’ of ‘blanche toile’ (shirt and breeches of white cloth) as a reward for satisfying sexual performance. The odd specificity of the image certainly seems to suggest that an in-joke is involved, now irrecoverable but implying a closely-knit audience alert to oblique reference and topical gossip.

### Letter 3

#### (fol. 126<sup>v</sup>[1]) Nommez

Niolas, noble Roigne de Nuby, des Philistiens et de les gentz Pharaos, Dame d’ambes les mieres d’Araby et de Surry, a tresfemelin, fresshe et fameuse dame Elianore, fille au Riche Roi dé Romaines, Roigne de Richesse et de Joie, Princesse de Gales et de Graunt Bretagne, Dame des Isles del Ocean. Tresfemelin fresshe et fameuse dame, pur ce que la chivalrie

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<sup>65</sup> Note, however, that the celebration at Bristol on New Year’s Day 1358 (a Monday) was described as the first *nocturnal* joust in England: *Eulogium Historiarum*, ed. F.S.Haydon, 3 Vols, (London: Longman, 1858-63), III, p. 227; see Vale, *Edward III and Chivalry*, p. 175.

<sup>66</sup> Ordinance for the Litsters, *York Memorandum Book*, ed. Maud Sellers, Surtees Society, Vol. 120 (1911), p.112.

d'autres rois aux roiaumes envers voz gentils gentz d'armes n'a d'autre comparaison que les esteilles petites et meins envers la lune lusaunte et graunde, de ce nous vient tresgraunde joie et plesaunce d'envoier devers vostre tresfamousse court un nostre chier et bien amé escuier, neez et norriz en nostre lige terre du South, nomez Segramour, lui desarmez, em priaunt de trestout nostre cuer que please a vostre noble noblay d'assigner un de voz meillours, jolifs joustours, li quel que plesir vous soit, present par mains ou par toute vostre festivale feste de Noël, de lui delivrer de sys coupes de launce, le marsdy prochain, assys en bases sceles saunz estre en nulle manere liez, en vostre presence, pur lui enseigner coment les chivalerouses chivalers de vostre court soloient enseigner lour filz et enfauntz de lour assaier as selles tenir. Donnee a nostre merveillouse manoir de Mont Syon, l'an de Macomed le Messenger Dieu mille...

### ***Translation***

#### **Named**

Niolas, noble Queen of Nubia, of the Philistines and of the people of Pharaoh, Lady of both the seas of Arabia and Syria, to the most feminine, fresh and famous lady Elianore, daughter of the powerful King of the Romans, Queen of Riches and of Joy, Princess of Wales and of Great Britain, Lady of the Isles of the Ocean. Most feminine, fresh and famous lady, because the chivalry of other kings in these kingdoms to your noble men-at-arms bears no other comparison than that of the small and lesser stars to the great and shining moon, on which account we have enormous joy and pleasure in sending to your most famous court a dear and well-loved squire of ours, born and brought up in our liege land of the South, called Segramour, being unarmed, begging with our whole heart, that it may please your noble nobility to assign one of your best, jolly joustors, whoever it may please you, to be present early in the morning or throughout your festive feast of Christmas, to deliver himself of six blows of the lance next Tuesday, seated in low saddles, without being in any way tied, in your presence, to teach him how the chivalrous knights of your court used to teach their sons and children to test themselves in staying firm in the saddle. Given at our marvellous manor of Mount Syon, in the year of Mahomet, God's Messenger one thousand....

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### ***Textual and Critical Notes***

*Nommez*: in left margin, in line with first line of text; the heading is enigmatic, though presumably picking up the introduction of the joustier ‘nomez Segramour’.

*Niolas*: the name is obscure: it is not known in epic, Arthurian or Alexander material.

*tresfemelin*: *AND* glosses ‘femelin’ only as ‘female’, but ‘feminine’ is clearly meant here.

*Elianore*: The most likely person to be identified with ‘Elianore, fille au Riche Roi dé Romaines’ is Eleanor of Lancaster, second cousin of Edward III and wife of Richard Fitzalan, Earl of Arundel (see Commentary).

*Riche Roi dé Romaines*: in the relevant period the King of the Romans could be either Charles IV (1350–1376) or his son Wenceslaus (1376–1400). Of these, Charles IV seems better suited to the epithet ‘Rich’ or ‘Powerful’; however, the most probable bearer of the title to be called the ‘father’ of Elianore is Richard of Cornwall (see Commentary); unnecessary qualifier ‘Riche’, spelt with a capital in the MS, may be playfully intended to evoke ‘Richard’.

*Isles del Occean*: the reference to ‘Isles of the Ocean’ — Ocean being the mass of water encircling the globe — may be a hyperbolic extension of the ‘Isles de Mer’ identified as the original home of Perceval’s father by Chrétien de Troyes; see Madeleine Blaess, ‘Perceval et les Iles de mer’, in *Mélanges de littérature du Moyen Âge...offerts à Mademoiselle Jeanne Lods* (Paris: École normale supérieure de jeunes filles, 1978), pp. 69–77.

*rois*: MS = roi.

*nostre*: MS = vostre.

*South*: it is unclear what ‘South’ refers to, but it could be Nubia or possibly Arabia.

*Segramour*: Sagremor, whose by-name is ‘li Desreez’ (‘the Unbridled’, ‘the Uncontrollable’, ‘the Savage’) is known in Arthurian literature from the earliest texts; with the spelling ‘Segramour’ the name could be interpreted as ‘Secret Love’.

*lui desarmez*: ‘he being unarmed’ might mean ‘not bearing weapons’ or ‘not yet knighted’.

*cuer*: MS = court.

*present par mains ou par toute vostre festive feste de Noël, de lui deliverer de sys coupes de launce, le marsdy prochein*: the chronological imprecisions in these lines, coupled with the reference to the whole feast of Christmas, stretching from Christmas day to Twelfth Night, to the fact that Segramour is to be unarmed and that his opponent will be an unnamed jouster described as ‘jolly’ or ‘merry’, suggests a distinctly carnivalesque atmosphere for the jousting.

*filz et enfauntz*: the apparent doublet suggests that ‘enfauntz’ here means ‘children’, although in epic and chivalric literature it often refers to young, untried warriors

*l’an de Macomed le Messenger Dieu mille...*: As in Judith’s letter, where the year of the Jewish calendar is left incomplete, there is no attempt to give a complete date according to the Muslim calendar.

### **Commentary**

Niolas is unknown elsewhere in literary or historical writing. Her titles partly overlap with those of Judith in the previous letter, suggesting a broadly Eastern and Arabian exoticism. The name of the addressee, Elianore, seems likely to indicate Eleanor of Lancaster, second cousin of Edward III, daughter of Henry, 3rd Earl of Lancaster. In 1345 Eleanor married Richard Fitzalan, Earl of Arundel, a wealthy magnate and a contemporary, and trusted ally, of the king.<sup>67</sup> Edward openly supported Fitzalan in the negotiations that led to his second marriage with Eleanor, the king and queen attending their wedding at Ditton.<sup>68</sup> Fitzalan held the office of justice of north Wales, his chief hereditary seats being in the Welsh marches, making ‘Princess of Wales’ a fictionally feasible title for Eleanor. Within the ludic context of the letters, there are slight grounds to associate her with the King of the Romans, a title given to the Holy Roman Emperor elect. Richard, Earl of Cornwall (1209–1272), a distant ancestor

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<sup>67</sup> ODNB, s.v. Richard Fitzalan (II)

<sup>68</sup> See W.M. Ormrod, ‘For Arthur and St George: Edward III, Windsor Castle and the Order of the Garter’, in *St George’s Chapel Windsor in the Fourteenth Century*, ed. by Nigel Saul (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2005), pp. 13–34 (at 31).

of the Fitzalan Earls of Arundel, was crowned King of the Romans in 1257, the only Englishman ever to hold the title, although he never became Emperor.<sup>69</sup>

For the squire recommended to joust, there is no evidence beyond his generic romance name, Segramour, and his provenance from ‘our liege land of the South’ (whether the South of Niolas’ romance dominions, or the England of the court). Segramour appears to be young, possibly not yet bearing arms, and to be treated, whether seriously or playfully, as a ‘son’ or ‘child’ learning the arts of jousting. The letter makes no further play with his identity, and the joust is set up in standard form: six blows of the lance in an attempt to unseat the opponent, the combatants being in low saddles and not fastened in their seats. Niolas appears to share a residence with Judith of fol. 96<sup>r</sup> (Mount Syon), even though one is represented as Muslim and the other Jewish. Even this, of course, could be a fantasised acknowledgement of the reality of mid-fourteenth-century Jerusalem.<sup>70</sup>

#### Letter 4

##### (fol.126<sup>v</sup>[2]) Norriez

Emely, Emperice d’Europe et de Judé, Roigne de Lease et de Joie, Princesse de Plesance, Dame des Tartaires, a tresexcellente, fameuse et tresnoble dame d’ilceste [...], eisné fille de la ligné Eneas, Roigne des Isles vers l’Occident, de la Grece et de la Graunde Bretaigne, Princesse du poeple de la chivalerouse lyné Brutus, honur, plesaunce et joie. Tresexcellente fameuse et tresnoble dame, pur ce que nous avons du vraie entenduz par noz treschiers et tresbien amez Fame et Bon Renoun, que ne cessent jour ne nuyt de visiter les loyntaignes roiaumes et courtes honorables, que vous tiendrez vostre tresfameuse court plainere en vostre Palloys de Plesaunce pres de vostre citee de Petite Troie, et avons un nostre treschier cousin, joefne doncelle, neez de nostre veisine terre de Grece et norriz en nostre chambre, liquel nous envoions par devers vous em priauntz tresentierement de cuer de vostre gracieuse noblay de comaunder le meillour chivaler deĩnz l’age de cynquante ans, et le meillour chivaler deĩnz l’age de quarante ans, et le meillour chivaler

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<sup>69</sup> Edward III was himself offered the title in 1347, soon after the Fitzalan marriage, but declined it in 1348 (Ormrod, *Edward III*, p. 325).

<sup>70</sup> See ‘Pluralism in the Holy City’ in *Jerusalem, 1000–1400: Every People Under Heaven*, ed. by Barbara Drake Boehm and Melanie Holcomb (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2016), pp. 65–75.



deĩnz l'age de trente ans present en vostre tresfamouse feste, que chescun des troys chivalers lui plesse delivrer de sys coupes de launce, assys, pur lui enseigner de soi tenir en son selle, nous reenvoiant, si plesir vous soit, si vous esperez nul bon en lui et sil soit vaillaunt de visiter les courtes roiaux de straunges roiaumes. Donee en nostre Chastel de Deduyt en nostre Roiaume de Lease, ové les trespuissauntz princes, les Rois Marce et Febus, q'on ut tenuz meintz delitables festes, l'an si bien de nostre nativitee come de nostre regne vynt et quart.

### ***Translation***

#### **Norriez**

Emely, Empress of Europe and Judaea, Queen of Pleasurableness and Joy, Princess of Pleasure, Lady of the Tartars, to the most excellent, famous and most noble lady of this [...], eldest daughter of the lineage of Aeneas, Queen of the Western Isles, of Greece and of Great Britain, princess of the people of the chivalrous lineage of Brutus, honour, pleasure and joy. Most excellent, famous and most noble lady, because we have truly heard through our dearest and best loved Fame and Good Renown, which do not cease day or night to visit distant kingdoms and honourable courts, that you will hold your most famous plenary court in your Palace of Pleasure, near your city of Little Troy, and we have one of our most dear cousins, a young lord, born in our land neighbouring Greece and brought up in our private apartments, him we send to you, begging most sincerely with a whole heart of your gracious nobility to order the best knight aged under fifty years, the best knight aged under forty years and the best knight aged under thirty years, present at your most famous feast, to be pleased, each of the three knights, to deliver himself of six lance blows, seated, to teach him to keep himself in his saddle, sending back to us, if it please you, to let us know whether you hope to find anything good in him, and if he is worthy to visit royal courts in foreign lands. Given in our Castle of Enjoyment in our Kingdom of Joyfulness, in the company of the most powerful princes, kings Marce and Febus, in which many delightful feasts have been held, in the twenty-fourth year both of our nativity and of our reign.

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### ***Textual and Critical Notes***

*Norriez*: in left margin in line with first line of text; *Norriez* is pp of *Norrir*; the adaptation to -er conjugation is typical of later AN, see M. K. Pope, *From Latin to Modern French*

(Manchester University Press, 1952), § 1315; I have left this title untranslated; it undoubtedly refers to the young nobleman mentioned below who was ‘norriz’ (brought up or educated) in the private apartments of Emely.

*Emely*, Emperice d’Europe: there is no record of an Emely as consort of a Holy Roman Emperor, this being the most likely interpretation of the attributed title of Empress of Europe; the following titles, mixing pure allegory and pseudo-realism, emphasise the ludic universe of the letters.

*Judé*: the almost complete confusion between ‘u’ and ‘n’ in this text makes it impossible to determine on palaeographical grounds whether the intended word is Judé (Judaea) or Inde (India).

*Lease*: *AND* registers several variant spellings of ‘leece’ (pleasure, joy) including ‘laesse’; although the form ‘lease’ is not included it is explicable as a spelling of the word; taken as a couplet with ‘Joie’ the sense is acceptable. Although the form of the ‘a’ is not totally clear, it is comparable to ‘a’ in ‘famouse’ in the next line.

*Plesance*: while possibly referring to the Italian city-state of Piacenza, it is more likely that, as elsewhere, the name is to be taken allegorically.

*Dame des Tartaires*: in the mid-fourteenth century there was still hope in Western Europe that the Tartars of the Golden Horde might be recruited for Christendom to help in the fight against Islam.

*ilceste*: The form *ilceste* fem. dem. is not registered anywhere in the *AND*, Godefroy or *T-L*. Godefroy alone offers a rare example of *ilcil*, where the reduplication of the consonant ‘l’ can explain the form. If we do accept *ilceste* as the reading we must posit a lacuna of at least one word; in the light of the range of geographical references in the appellations of both writer and addressee, it is possible that the original reading either named an ‘Ille’ (‘island’, the second ‘l’ being misread as ‘c’), or by an inversion of syllables named Sicily under one of its many variant spellings.

*eisné*: the failure of gender agreement may be only apparent: there is a regular orthographic confusion of -é and -ee.

*Isles vers l'Occident*: While this reference to Western Isles may indicate the Hebrides and derive from Arthurian tradition, it is also possible that the reference is to the Hesperides, which would have been known in the fourteenth century through Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, either in the original Latin or in the Old French translation, *Ovide moralisé*.

et: this co-ordinated clause is causal, the conjunction 'pur ce que' being understood.

*nostre veisine terre de Grece*: This reading, which seems to attribute Greece to Emely might indicate that the reference to Greece in the opening salutations has been misplaced; certainly it does not fit easily with the other lands attributed to the addressee, but would fit well with the list of Emely's territories. Alternatively, if the readings of the letter have not been disturbed, we should interpret this construction as 'in our land neighbouring Greece'.

*liquel*: the relative pronoun seems to function in this convoluted sentence as a personal pronoun object of the only possible main clause in the sentence.

*assys*: either the author of this letter or the copyist has omitted the usual reference to the type of saddle — normally a low saddle in these letters — to be used.

*soit*: this use of the pres. subj. in a conditional clause is often held to be typical of AN, influenced by ME usage.

*de straunges*: MS = *destraunges* with no word break; it is impossible to decide whether to read 'd'estraunges' or 'de straunges'; I have opted for the latter because AN frequently drops epenthetic 'e' after a determiner or preposition ending in a vowel.

*Marce et Febus*: These two references are obscure, but the names probably refer to the gods Mars and Phoebus Apollo; their association with Emely may point to a literary origin in Boccaccio's *Teseida* (see Commentary).

*l'an si bien de nostre nativitee come de nostre regne vynt et quart*: The dating of the letter offers the most unusual, perhaps unique, situation of an empress acceding to the throne within the first year of her life.

### **Commentary**

The sender's name, Emely, occurs in medieval romance (witness Boccaccio's *Teseida della nozze d'Emilia*, followed by Chaucer's *Knight's Tale*), although not as an empress.<sup>71</sup> The addressee is not named, but references to the 'lineage of Aeneas', 'Queen ... of Great Britain' and 'Little Troy' (cf. Pantesilia) point fairly decisively to Queen Philippa. The fantasy geography of the titles of both sender and recipient presents some uncertainties. From the scribe's hand, we cannot tell whether Emely's territory includes Judaea or India, while Philippa is puzzlingly saluted as 'Queen ... of Greece', a title that would seem more appropriate for Emely and is perhaps misplaced.

There are no hints as to the identity of the young jousting recommended, except the opaque reference to his birth in or near Greece. The joust, however, is in a newly entertaining format, prescribing combats with knights of three ages. While this patterning sounds romance-derived, the letters suggest that real individuals are involved and intended to be recognised; but with only the ages to go on, it is not possible to identify them positively. In the 1350s, 'the best knight aged under fifty years' would, at least in complimentary terms, be Edward III himself who would turn 50 in 1362. He apparently continued to fight in the lists on occasion until at least 1359, when armour was provided for him at the tournament of Smithfield following the marriage of John of Gaunt.<sup>72</sup> The Black Prince who was born in 1330 might be considered the 'best knight under thirty years' until 1360, after which he might qualify as best under forty. However, given the slight clues in other letters about the kinds of combatants involved in these jousts, there is no probability that any of the royal family were themselves taking part: 'the best knight' with its romance connotations is clearly a title of honour for the occasion rather than a formal ranking. But the close companionship encouraged at court would make Edward and his sons touchstones for the age groups of the knights defined here.

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<sup>71</sup> Boccaccio's Emilia is by far the most influential occurrence of the name in medieval romance. It is possibly significant that as the sister of Hippolyta she is another Amazon.

<sup>72</sup> Anthony Goodman, *John of Gaunt: The Exercise of Princely Power in Fourteenth-Century Europe* (Harlow: Longman, 1992), pp. 34–35.

Emely's allegorical residence emphasises the essentially playful and celebratory nature of these jousting games. The allusion to 'the most powerful princes, kings Marce and Febus' is not immediately clear, but it seems most likely that these kings represent the gods, Mars and Phoebus. As patrons respectively of battle, and of joy and gladness, they are appropriate to the context of the letter, and the *MED* confirms possible spellings.<sup>73</sup> The two gods appear together in Chaucer's *Knight's Tale* and *Anelida and Arcite*, both of which have their source in Boccaccio's *Teseida*, in which 'Emelia' (Emely) also appears. The reference to the twenty-fourth year 'both of our nativity and of our reign' appears obscure, although the strange precision of this dating suggests some specific meaning. Read in conjunction with the trio of characters as a literary allusion, this may point to a surprisingly early awareness at the English court of the *Teseida*, just twenty-four years after its composition in 1339–1341.<sup>74</sup> This interpretation of the dating of the letter would also suggest that 'Norrie' belongs to a later event than some of the others copied in the Letter Book, to one occurring in the years 1363–1365. The most likely occasion could be the tournament held in 1363 when both David II of Scotland and Pierre I de Lusignan, King of Cyprus, were in London.<sup>75</sup> The presence of the latter could equally offer a clue to the identity of the enigmatic young jousting knight, Pierre was 35 in 1363, born in 'our land neighbouring Greece'. A further corollary of this dating is that we would seem to have a witness to a continuing fashion for composing jousting letters at Edward III's court, partially filling the gap between 1356/1357 and 1401.

## Letter 5

### (fol. 126<sup>v</sup>[3]-127<sup>r</sup>) Nadamours

Philippe, la beale fille au noble Roi Eneas, Emperice d'Espoir, Roigne de Loreine, Dame de touz loiaux amauntz, a tresexcellente et fameuse et de touz vertues la plus renomee dame, Roigne de Albioun, Princesse de la chivalerouse poeple, saluz saunz amour! Nous envoions par devers vous nostre chier et foiau chivaler, monseignour Frik de Frikaunce

<sup>73</sup> *MED*, s.v. *Mars* and *Phebus*. In its quotations, Mars and the Sun are often paired, eg 'Mars & þe sonne ywis', c1325; 'Mars the Planete bataillous Next to the Sonne glorious', c1393. Phoebus is also the sender of one of the 1401 letters.

<sup>74</sup> Chaucer's *Knight's Tale* (c. 1387) is the earliest English reference discussed in Susan L. Wing, 'Something about Emilia', in *Comparative Literature East and West: Traditions and Trends*, ed. by Cornelia Niekus Moore and Raymond A. Moody (Honolulu: University of Hawaii, 1989), pp. 139–54; for the date of the *Teseida* and the lack of manuscript witnesses to the work before the late fourteenth-century, see Rhiannon Daniels, *Boccaccio and the Book: Production and Reading in Italy 1340–1520*, Italian Perspectives, 19 (London: Legenda, 2009), p. 48.

<sup>75</sup> Ormrod, *Edward III*, pp. 452–3 and n. 32.

pur deliverer les chalenges que lui ount estee fait par lui noble, vaillaunt Sire de Chastillon, joefne, joli joustour en vostre roial court, vous requerant honurement, si Dieu doint grace a nostre dit chivaler de parfournir lé ditz chalenges saunz perdre sa vie ou sauntee, q'Il ce face, vous please comaunder le plus joefne chivaler de l'onurable compaignie du Jarter, q'estan present en vostre noble court, pur deliverer nostre dit chivaler de troys coupes de launce sanz hurtier des chivaux, pur lui enseigner de soi le mieux adresser en fait d'armes, nous certefiauntz par voz messages ce que nostre dit chivaler avera (fol. 127r) fait et vostre voluntee si chose soit que faire puissons a vostre plesaunce. Donnee le jour de la fesaunce de cestes a nostre Chastel Disconuz.

### ***Translation***

#### **Nadamours**

Philippa, worthy daughter of the noble king Eneas, Empress of Hope, Queen of Lorraine, Lady of all loyal lovers, to the most excellent and famous and most renowned lady of all virtues, Queen of Albion, Princess of the chivalrous people, greetings without love! We send to you our dear and faithful knight, my lord Frik de Frikaunce, to discharge himself of the challenges which have been made to him by the noble, valiant lord of Chastillon, a young and merry joustour in your royal court, asking you honourably, if God grants grace to our said knight to execute successfully the said challenges without losing his life or health, may He do this, that it please you to command the youngest knight of the honourable company of the Garter being present in your noble court, to deliver our said knight three blows of the lance without collision of the horses, to teach him to handle himself as best he can in feats of arms, certifying to us by your messengers what our said knight has achieved and your wish, if there is anything we can do for your pleasure. Given the day of the production of these presents in our Unknown Castle.

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### ***Textual and Critical Notes***

*Nadamours*: in left margin level with first line of text.

*Philippe, la beale fille au noble Roi Eneas*: this appellation raises problems: the *Trésor de la Langue Française* does not record the use of 'belle-fille' as daughter-in-law before the late

fifteenth century; *AND* registers only ‘bel frere’ as stepbrother from the late twelfth century, citing *Protheselaiüs* by Hue de Rothelande. A confusion between ‘stepdaughter’ and ‘daughter-in-law’ is not impossible; however, the most probable interpretation, supported by quotations in Godefroy, is ‘worthy daughter’. Philippa as daughter of the Count of Hainault could be described as a descendant of Aeneas, because her father’s French blood allowed a mythical tracing of ancestry back to the Trojan hero; equally, as wife of Edward III, descended from Aeneas through Brutus in direct line according to British myth-history, she could claim the relationship through marriage.

*Roigne de Loreine*: in the fourteenth century the kingdom of Lorraine had long been divided into two duchies. In the mid-fourteenth century Upper Lorraine was ruled by John I, Duke of Lorraine (1346–1390), whose father Rudolph died at Crécy in the army of Philip VI of France. Lower Lorraine, incorporated into the Duchy of Brabant since 1190, was ruled from 1355–1383 by duke Wenceslas I. Given the various links between these areas and the court of Edward III, it is possible that an allusion to Lorraine and a dream of reunification under the rule of Philippa of Hainault and Edward might be intended. There is also a possible pun: the appellation could mean, with jousting and erotic intent ‘Queen of the Reins’ or ‘Queen of the Bridle’. The generally ludic nature of these letters makes it possible that all these senses were in play at the same time.

*Roigne de Albioun, Princesse de la chivalerouse poeple*: Albioun generally refers to Britain, though it could refer simply to Scotland. Froissart, who acted as Philippa’s secretary during the 1360s, and travelled to Scotland in 1365, repeatedly stresses the chivalric credentials of the Scots. For his nostalgic memory of that visit, giving a flavour of the positive attitude he had towards the Scottish royal court and aristocracy, see Jean Froissart, *Le Joli Buisson de Jonece*, ed. by Anthime Fourrier (Geneva: Droz, 1975), lines 363–73.

*Saluz saunz amour*: this is a very unusual greeting. In context ‘amour’ could refer to a political alliance, but normally when such an alliance does not exist there is a simple refusal to wish ‘salut’ (salvation) to the recipient (see Jean-Claude Vallecalle, *Messages et ambassades dans l’épopée française médiévale. L’illusion du dialogue* (Paris: Champion, 2006), pp. 249–57). In the broader context of the letter ‘amour’ may refer to erotic love.

*Frik de Frikaunce* : the name can be construed in several ways: if from OF ‘frisque’, possibly influenced for its spelling by ME ‘frike’ it could imply sprightliness, nimbleness or vivacity; *AND* registers a spelling ‘frick’ (s.v. ‘fresch’) with a possible meaning ‘ready to fight’; *La Vie du Prince Noir by Chandos Herald*, ed. by Diana B. Tyson, Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für Romanische Philologie, 147 (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1975), describes the ladies at a ball celebrating the victory at Poitiers as ‘Tres amoureuse, frike et bele’ (l. 1512); Tyson does not gloss ‘frik’ but in a note to l. 1512 refers to the review by P. Studer of the Pope and Lodge edition, where he relates it to OF ‘frais’ without adding a gloss, *Modern Language Review*, 7 (1912), 402–06 (p. 406); the collocation with ‘amoureuse’ and ‘bele’ suggests ‘young’ or ‘fresh complexioned’ for ‘frike’; it is notable that Tyson follows Pope in placing the language of Chandos Herald in the Hainault region, which would make him, like Froissart a compatriot of the Queen, Tyson. ed. cit. p. 14. No dictionary registers the form Frikaunce; MED has ‘friknesse’, glossed as ‘vigour’ or ‘daring’; the form given in the letter is presumably related to the ME form, but with a French suffix; the full name adopts a typical *chanson de geste* strategy of naming warriors, in which given name and byname echo each other. It is not possible to suggest an identity for the person covered by the pseudonym, which could mean ‘Valiant of Valour’ or ‘Young of Youthfulness’

*lui*: for this form of the masculine def. art. in AN see Pope, § 1253 (iii).

*Sire de Chastillon*: it is difficult to identify this person. Kervyn de Lettenhove, *Œuvres de Froissart, Chroniques*, 28 vols, (Brussels: Académie Royale des Sciences, des Lettres et des Beaux-Arts de Belgique, 1875), XX, 554–56, lists nine people potentially bearing that title, sometimes in conjunction with other titles. From among these the most probable candidate is Jean de Chastillon, Lord of both Chastillon and Dampierre (c1290 / 1300–1362), who was active in the service of the King of France, Philip VI, in the 1340s: Froissart had the habit of referring to him simply as ‘le sire de Chastillon’ (de Lettenhove, 20, 554). However, recent research suggests that Jean would have been at least in his late 50s, if not in his 60s, at the time the letter was composed (see Commentary), so the reference to him as a ‘young and merry jouster’ would be part of the now enigmatic humour of the letter.

*comaunder le plus joefne chivaler*: the use of direct object of the person commanded may be a confusion between ‘command’ and ‘commend’ or it may be influenced by the ME construction.



*l'onorable compaignie du Jarter*: The Order of the Garter was founded in 1348, which gives a *terminus post quem* for this letter.

*pur deliverer*: The use of the purposive construction instead of the expected Fr and AN *commander à quelqu'un de faire* may be influenced by the ME construction *command someone to do something*.

*Donnee*: MS = Donne.

*le jour de la fesaunce de cestes a nostre Chastel Disconuz*: The self-referential dating and the name of the castle underline the purely ludic nature of the letter.

### ***Commentary***

This letter is unusual in being sent as from Queen Philippa, rather than from an imaginary lady. Her partly-romanticised titles are similar to those ascribed to her elsewhere in the letters, but based in France rather than England. Unusually too, the addressee, the lady of the tournament, is given no name. Her title as 'Queen of Albion' would be appropriate to Philippa herself, and its regal implications restrict the possibilities for identification. Conceivably, 'Albioun' may refer specifically to Scotland rather than the whole of Britain, which could point to Edward III's sister Joan of England, consort of David II of Scotland (reigned 1329–1371) as addressee. Joan's marriage was held to be loveless, being not only childless but openly adulterous on David's part, possibly justifying the term 'Nadamours'. Separating from David in 1357, Joan lived in England in close contact with the court until her death in 1362. She is known to have attended events such as the magnificent Garter celebrations of 1358.<sup>76</sup>

The other addressee who might be given the romance title 'Queen of Albion' was Edward III's (and Joan's) mother, Isabelle of France, queen consort of Edward II. Isabelle lived on until 1358 and, although initially estranged from her son after the deposition and murder of her husband, during the 1350s she was visited regularly both by Edward and her grandson the Black Prince. During the captivity of Jean II after Poitiers she was in close

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<sup>76</sup>Thomas Gray, *Scalacronica 1272–1363*, ed. and trans. by Andy King, Publications of the Surtees Society (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2005), pp. 150–51.

touch with many of his entourage, and attended jousting events at court, including the Garter celebrations in 1358 shortly before her death.<sup>77</sup> Chandos Herald singles her out as being present at the post-Poitiers celebrations, calling her the king's 'miere qui l'ot moult chiere'.<sup>78</sup> It is less clear why she might be referred to as 'Nadamours', unless it were an oblique reference to her age and controversial history.

'Nadamours' is, however, a later heading attached to the letter, rather than part of its original content. It picks up the puzzlingly negative greeting from the sender: 'saluz saunz amour'. Such a salutation is virtually unknown, surviving only in a letter cited as evidence in a 1336 King's Bench case, in which a self-styled outlaw threatened a local parson: 'Lyonel, roi de la Route de Raueners a nostre faux et desloiaux Richard de Snaweshill, salutz saunz amour' (Lyonel, king of the Company of Raveners to our false and disloyal Richard de Snaweshill, greetings without love).<sup>79</sup> The court identified this letter as a parody of royal style that was seriously prejudicial to the king. It is wholly unclear how this insulting phrase contributes to the 'Nadamours' letter as a whole, or to either Joan or Isabella, unless it is another private joke, made safe by shared knowledge. It is perhaps possible that 'saunz amour' were words added satirically by the clerk copyist of the original letter, familiar with court gossip.

The details of the proposed joust are also opaque. Philippa's champion, 'Frik de Frikaunce', is described as a dear and faithful knight — so presumably experienced in handling arms — and given the honorific title of 'Monseigneur', normally reserved in literature for the most senior members of Arthur's Round Table. Yet he is recommended for an encounter to learn 'to handle himself ... in feats of arms'. The Sire de Chastillon has offered him unspecified challenges; responding successfully to them will precede a combat envisaged with the youngest Knight of the Garter. It may be possible to identify the Sire de Chastillon from clues in the context created by the letter (see Notes). He is said to be currently at the court of Nadamours, and one period when many French nobles were present in England are the years immediately following the battle of Poitiers when the French king, Jean II, and many of his aristocrats were held for ransom. The prisoners were treated as honourable opponents, entertained by markedly heightened chivalric festivity between

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<sup>77</sup> Edward A. Bond, 'Notices of the Last Days of Isabella, Queen of Edward the Second', *Archaeologia: or Miscellaneous tracts relating to antiquity*, 1770–1992, 35 (1853), 453–69 (p.459).

<sup>78</sup> *La Vie du Prince Noir*, ed. by Tyson, I. 1510.

<sup>79</sup> SCKB V, pp. 93–95; text in E. L. G. Stones, 'The Folvilles of Ashby-Folville, Leicestershire, and their Associates in Crime, 1326–1347', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 7 (1957), 117–36, at 134–35; see Richard Firth Green, *A Crisis of Truth: Literature and Law in Ricardian England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), pp. 187–89.

autumn 1357 and summer 1358.<sup>80</sup> Isabelle's household accounts show that she was in regular contact with several of them over this period, as well as with Jean II himself.<sup>81</sup>

Jean II de Chastillon, one likely challenger of Frik de Frikaunce, was a Maître de l'Hôtel of the French king and himself a casualty of 1356. A letter from the Black Prince after Poitiers mentions him by name, reporting that he was taken in a skirmish two days before the battle.<sup>82</sup> Recent research on the prisoners of Poitiers found no evidence that he was among those taken to London, and suggested this might be due to his advanced age, being apparently in his late sixties by 1357.<sup>83</sup> But age clearly had not hindered him from the battlefield; he was well placed to deliver some sort of challenge, perhaps especially one not specified as a joust, within the mood of honourable defeat and celebration current at the time. If he is the letter's Sire de Chastillon, however, it would make the reference to a 'young and merry jouster' playfully ironic.

Candidates for the 'youngest Knight of the Garter' may be narrower, unless the reference is simply to the youngest Garter Knight currently present at court. After the order was founded in 1348 there were few new investitures until the 1360s.<sup>84</sup> We cannot verify the birthdates of all the Garter Knights during the likely period of these letters, although it is clear that the Black Prince, aged eighteen when appointed in 1348, was and remained one of the youngest. The other likeliest possibility is John de Grailly, the Captal de Buch, another founder member, contemporary of the Prince, who is often assumed to have a birthdate around 1331.<sup>85</sup> Grailly fought at Poitiers, and was admired by Froissart who records him as accompanying Edward's triumphant return to England.<sup>86</sup> This is confirmed by his appearance in Isabelle's household accounts as one of her visitors in November 1357.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Michael Bennett, 'Isabelle of France, Anglo-French Diplomacy and Cultural Exchange in the Late 1350s' in *The Age of Edward III*, ed. by J.S. Boswell (York: York Medieval Press, 2001), pp. 215-25 (p. 215); Murphy, *Captivity of John II*, p. 20. These celebrations are mentioned by Chandos Herald: see *La Vie du Prince Noir*, ed. by Tyson, ll. 1508-16.

<sup>81</sup> Bond, 'Notices'.

<sup>82</sup> See *Memorials of London and London life, in the XIIIth, XIVth, and XVth centuries*, ed. by Henry Thomas Riley (London: Longman, Green and Co, 1868), pp. 285-8 (p. 287).

<sup>83</sup> Françoise Bériac-Lainé and Chris Given-Wilson, *Les prisonniers de la bataille de Poitiers* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2002), pp. 37, 262.

<sup>84</sup> George Frederick Beltz, *Memorials of the Order of the Garter: From Its Foundation to the Present Time* (London: William Pickering, 1841), pp. cxlix-cliii.

<sup>85</sup> Beltz, *Memorials*, pp. 28-33.

<sup>86</sup> See *The Online Froissart*, < <https://www.hrionline.ac.uk/onlinefroissart/> >, Paris ms. fr. 2663, fol. 197<sup>r</sup> [consulted 9.10.2017]

<sup>87</sup> Bond, 'Notices', p. 456. Chandos, *Life of the Black Prince*, claims that Grailly was also in England in 1355 at the time of the tournament to celebrate the birth of Philippa's youngest son Thomas of Woodstock ll. 518-531, pp 15/16.

This suggests a plausible if unprovable collocation: the man who was probably the youngest Knight of the Garter at the time the letters were written was in England and visiting Isabelle de France in 1357-8; at the same time Jean, Sire de Chastillon was, whether or not actually present himself, a close colleague of French captives who were.<sup>88</sup> Both men were, in different ways, directly connected to the Black Prince. It is even conceivable that Frik de Frikaunce, sent by Philippa, might then be identified with Prince Edward himself, Grailly's closest contemporary and victor over Chastillon. These must all remain entirely hypothetical possibilities; but whether or not accurate in detail, they seem to confirm how the letters reflect real and playfully intimate connections between individual members of Edward's court.

Philip E. Bennett, Sarah Carpenter, Louise Gardiner  
University of Edinburgh

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<sup>88</sup> The French king's supreme Maître d'hotel, the Comte de Tancarville, was a regular visitor to Isabelle: Bond, 'Notices', pp. 457-8.